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THE CONJURER

A Dramatic Mystery in Three Acts

By

MANSFIELD SCOTT

Author of "The Air-Spy," "The Submarine Shell," etc.

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BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1919

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The Conjuror

CHARACTERS

INSPECTOR MALCOME STEELE.
GEORGE CLIFFORD.
CAPTAIN FRANK DRUMMOND GLEASON.
LIEUTENANT HAMILTON WARWICK.
COLONEL WILLARD ANDERSON.
DRISCOLL WELLS.
DOCTOR GORDON PEAK.
DETECTIVE WHITE.
MARION ANDERSON.
EDITH ANDERSON.
ELLEN GLEASON.
DOROTHY ELMSTROM.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—The home of Colonel Anderson (Friday evening).
ACT II.—The office of Inspector Steele (Saturday afternoon).
ACT III.—The same as Act II (Saturday evening).



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MAR 25 1919

(See page 28 and 29)



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The Conjuror

ACT I

SCENE.—*The home of Colonel Anderson. Friday evening. The scene is any well-furnished room. There is a large rug, and plenty of chairs, but not very much immovable furniture. Back near the wall, at L., there is a table, upon which are arranged a number of books and magazines, and a vase of flowers. There is a picture hanging in C., and also one at each end of the room, on the wall at the side. The two doors are at the sides. There is a switch close beside the door at L., and directly under the picture hanging at that end. This particular picture is a painting of General Grant.*

(In the room are GEORGE CLIFFORD, CAPTAIN FRANK GLEASON, and LIEUTENANT HAMILTON WARWICK. The last two named are in uniform. GEORGE CLIFFORD is a young man of about twenty-three. He is of medium height, with rather dark hair and complexion, and might be called handsome. He is inclined to be a bit impulsive, but there is an air of honesty and straightforward dealing in his manner that makes him likeable. CAPTAIN FRANK GLEASON is taller, and a little darker. He has a rather deep voice, and at times he has a very irritating way of making sarcastic comments. LIEUTENANT HAMILTON WARWICK is very tall, with light complexion. He is a dude. He knows everything that can be known about war and military matters, and does not hesitate to display his knowledge. GEORGE CLIFFORD is standing a little apart from his two companions.

*He is apparently engaged in a great mental struggle.
At length he raises his head, and turns to the others.)*

CLIFFORD. I can't!

GLEASON (*in disgust*). Can't!

WARWICK. Oh, I say, George, hadn't you better reconsider this?

CLIF. Oh, I—I can't, Warwick. I've told you my reasons. I can't, that's all.

GLEA. Oh, come, come; Clifford! That's the most ridiculous —

CLIF. Gleason, you're not fair to me. I've told you again and again that I promised my mother I'd not enlist,—and you know that's the reason why I haven't done it!

WAR. Clifford, that's absolutely the silliest excuse I ever heard! And the nonsensical claim that got you your exemption was nothing less than laughable!

GLEA. What's the use of arguing with him, Hamie? He's made up his mind that he won't fight for Uncle Sam, and you might as well not talk to him.

CLIF. Frank, I've told you —

GLEA. Oh, tommyrot!

WAR. That's exactly what it is, Clifford,—tommyrot. Your heart is absolutely normal in every way. That's what three well-known doctors have said, and that's what I say, too!

CLIF. I know that. But my grandfather's heart was normal all his life, up to the age of forty. He died from excitement, during a storm at sea. My father's heart was normal, too, and he died at the age of twenty-nine, because somebody fired a gun close behind him on a hunting trip. Mother feels that I couldn't stand fighting in the trenches, and it's only fair to her that I should ask exemption. If you think —

GLEA. No, I don't think! I know. It's a clever excuse that will fool our army doctors, but it doesn't fool me, or Warwick either. You're a rotten coward, Clifford! You haven't got the nerve to fight; you'd rather let *us* fight *for* you, while you're home showing off your playthings to a crowd of —

CLIF. (*hotly*). Gleason, you've no right to say that! I'm not afraid to fight, and I'm not afraid to die, and some day I'll *prove* that to you! I want to go to war! But I have a duty to mother; I *must* consider her first! And as for your insult about my "playthings," let me tell you that I am only using a God-given gift to raise money for *you* fellows to fight with!

WAR. (*hastily*). Oh, yes, I say, Frank, you didn't mean it exactly that way, you know.

(*The door at L. opens suddenly. Enter MARION ANDERSON and EDITH ANDERSON, followed by ELLEN GLEASON and COLONEL WILLARD ANDERSON. COLONEL ANDERSON is in uniform. MARION ANDERSON is rather short of stature, quite pretty, with dark complexion. Her sister EDITH is light, and taller. ELLEN GLEASON is the tallest of the three; her complexion, in contrast to that of her brother, is very light. COLONEL WILLARD ANDERSON is a man perhaps fifty years old. He is rather short and stout, with moustache and hair slightly gray. He is energetic in action and in speech.*)

COLONEL ANDERSON. Here are the rest of our guests of honor.

(*GLEASON is still facing CLIFFORD, in an attitude of contempt. EDITH ANDERSON and ELLEN GLEASON approach the three.*)

GLEA. (*turning slowly*). Thank you, Colonel Anderson. But I can't say that I find your remark a compliment.

(*ELLEN GLEASON stares at her brother in astonishment.*)

EDITH. Why,—why, Frank, what do you mean?

(*COLONEL ANDERSON comes forward, puzzled.*)

WAR. (*awkwardly*). Oh, I—I hardly think Frank means all this, just as he said it, you know.

AND. Well, just what *did* you mean, Frank?

GLEA. (*turning away from CLIFFORD*). Oh, nothing at all, Colonel.

CLIF. Colonel Anderson, I'll tell you exactly what he meant. He meant that he doesn't care to have you class him with me, that's all. Because I'm not in uniform ——

ELLEN. Frank, you didn't say that!

MARION (*crossing quickly to CLIFFORD*). George, what has happened?

CLIF. He has insulted me, Marion,—intentionally.

GLEA. (*in disgust*). Insulted him! I told him that he invented excuses to claim exemption, and I meant it. He's no American!

MARION (*with indignation*). Captain Gleason! I ——

AND. Come, come, Frank. There's no reason to talk this way. You know, and we all know, that George is doing the very most he can for the country. He's been taking hours away from his business every day. I'm sure you'll apologize.

GLEA. (*slowly*). Oh,—oh, very well, Colonel. Clifford, I forgot myself. I'm sorry I *said* anything.

AND. And let's not have any more of this strained feeling, fellows. We don't want any unpleasant recollections ——

ELLEN (*glancing out through the door at L.*). Oh, Mr. Wells has come!

WAR. Oh, good! Let's go out, Ellen, and meet him.

EDITH. Oh, yes. Come, Frank, we'll go, too. Don't you think he's wonderful?

GLEA. I certainly never heard any one like him.

(ELLEN GLEASON and WARWICK go out, followed by EDITH ANDERSON and GLEASON. COLONEL ANDERSON starts to follow them, but returns.)

AND. George, you mustn't feel hurt about this. I wouldn't have you uncomfortable for the world.

CLIF. Please don't feel anxious about me. I—I don't mind it a bit.

MARION. But I know you do mind it, George. And I mind it. (*She pauses a moment.*) Won't you please change your decision, George? I know I've asked you again and again, but I'm going to do it this once more. Can't you, please, join the army, for my sake?

CLIF. Marion, you know I can't! I'd do anything in the world for you, and you know that, but I—I can't break a promise to mother!

MARION. Oh, George! You don't know how I feel——

AND. You mustn't urge him this way, Marion. We know he has the best of reasons——

MARION. I can't help it, father! I—I keep thinking of Edith, and of Ellen Gleason, and I see how proud *they* are of Lieutenant Warwick, and—and Captain Gleason. And—and the other girls all tell Edith and Ellen how lucky they are, and—and they seem to pity me. Can't you understand, father? I want George to *do* something that he can be proud of!

CLIF. Oh, I know it, Marion; I know it! Every one thinks I'm a coward——

AND. No one thinks that, George! And as for Frank and Hamilton, Marion, I'm very sure that neither of them can say that he has already raised over six thousand dollars for the use of our soldiers!

MARION. I know, but——

Enter EDITH ANDERSON and GLEASON, with DOROTHY ELMSTROM. They are followed by ELLEN GLEASON, and WARWICK, with DRISCOLL WELLS and INSPECTOR MALCOME STEELE. DOROTHY ELMSTROM is a young lady of medium height, with brown hair which is neither light nor dark. Her voice is low, and she is rather quiet, though when she converses she does so in a convincing manner. DRISCOLL WELLS is a small, frail man, about thirty years of age. His health is apparently very delicate, and his voice is a trifle high-pitched. INSPECTOR STEELE is tall and powerfully built. At ordinary times he is deliberate in action and speech. One can make no definite estimate as to his age. At times he seems forty; at other times he has the quickness and sudden decision of a man of thirty. His voice is distinctive, and commands attention whenever he speaks. COLONEL ANDERSON greets DRISCOLL WELLS and INSPECTOR STEELE.

AND. Miss Elmstrom, let me present Mr. George Clifford. (CLIFFORD bows.) And, George, I think you met Mr. Driscoll Wells here last winter. (*They shake hands cordially.*) And, Mr. Steele —

INSPECTOR STEELE (*shaking hands with CLIFFORD*). Yes, indeed, Colonel. Clifford, I am glad to see you again.

DOROTHY (*glancing at CLIFFORD with recognition*). Oh, Mr.—Mr. Clifford, aren't you—are you "Professor Harkman"?

AND. (*laughing*). Then you've discovered that already, Miss Elmstrom!

DOR. I have! (*She turns to CLIFFORD.*) I certainly enjoyed your performance at the Brookside Club Wednesday evening.

CLIF. Oh, then you were there Wednesday?

DOR. Yes. You see, I have been visiting here with Marion ever since I came across from Berlin Monday. Louise Chapman, another of my old friends, invited me to the club Wednesday. I think your performance was the most mysterious and marvellous exhibition I ever saw.

STEELE. Then you've given another performance since last Saturday, Mr. Clifford. I saw you then, at Wendell Hall.

AND. I was there Saturday, too.

STEELE. You must have raised quite a sum at that time, judging from the attendance.

CLIF. We cleared between five and six hundred dollars Saturday, and about four hundred, I believe, at the club Wednesday.

ELLEN. Why, I never knew that! Did you, Hamilton?

WAR. Why, I—I certainly think it's remarkable!

STEELE. You have a wonderful ability, Clifford.

AND. And he is putting it to a most excellent use. I maintain, friends, that the men who carry muskets are not the only ones who serve America. The man who supplies those muskets, in my opinion, does as much as the fighters, and every bit as much!

DOR. I certainly agree with you, Colonel Anderson.

WAR. To tell the truth, I'm of practically the same opinion myself.

GLEA. And I agree, too, Colonel, provided that the man who remains at home to do this is not physically able to do his real duty at the front.

DOR. But if a person is more fitted for specialized service at home, I think he should give that service.

GLEA. True enough, Miss Elmstrom. But some of these forms of service are, essentially, for the physically unfit.

(DOROTHY *laughs*.)

DOR. As I have understood your argument, Captain Gleason, you would seem to suggest, for instance, that the head of our American Secret Service, Inspector Steele, should enlist for trench service, and leave *his* duties to the physically unfit! (*A hearty laugh from COLONEL ANDERSON. GLEASON is uncomfortable.*) Or, perhaps, that Dr. Gordon Peak had better have gone to Europe. And in regard to Mr. Clifford, I think that his course has been most admirable, in every way!

CLIF. Oh, I—this is certainly very kind of you, Miss Elmstrom!

WELLS. I understand, Colonel Anderson, that Dr. Peak is at present your guest.

AND. I'm greatly honored to be able to say that he is. He has spent the past two days with us. He hasn't been very well to-day, but I expect him down soon.

MARION. It seems wonderful that we really have him here with us!

GLEA. Then you think that Dr. Peak's discovery will prove to be of some real value?

STEELE. It is certainly one of the greatest steps that our country has taken in this war.

GLEA. (*surprised*). You really believe so! But the Government, you know, doesn't see it that way. At Washington they say his scheme is impracticable.

WAR. And that is precisely the way it seemed to me.

STEELE. I'm sorry to say that our Government officials have been exceedingly slow in this matter. It has taken weeks where it should have taken days. Until

they have satisfied themselves, beyond the last possible question, that Dr. Peak's amyl compound will do all that he claims it will do, they won't buy it.

AND. It's maddening. Why, they won't even pay Dr. Peak enough to settle the debt which he incurred in his research work on this compound until they have tested it to their own satisfaction.

ELLEN. Is that really true?

AND. It certainly is. Perhaps you can imagine how matters stand. When a man has given over practically all his capital to such a work for the nation, and has run up a debt which is really very great,—if he won't accept so large a loan,—what is he going to do? Of course, I know the doctor is sensitive about this, and I shouldn't have spoken of it, but it—it isn't fair.

WELLS. But please tell me just what Dr. Peak has done.

AND. Why, Mr. Wells, don't you know?

WELLS (*shaking his head with a smile*). I really don't. One hears very little of America when he is travelling abroad.

MARION. I thought every one must have heard of this. All England must know about it, for ——

STEELE. And Germany, too, Miss Anderson.

EDITH. But there is Dr. Peak now, in the library. Do come in, every one, and meet him.

(*They turn, and follow her through the door at R.*

CLIFFORD *starts to go with the others, but* COLONEL

ANDERSON *puts his hand on his shoulder and keeps him until all have gone.*)

AND. George, I'm terribly sorry that Frank has started this kind of talk. I wouldn't have had it happen for the world, especially after the unpleasantness we had here yesterday, between Miss Elmstrom and Dr. Peak. I know you must be troubled ——

CLIF. No, Colonel, no. I don't mind. You know I'm not a coward. You know I'm only waiting for a chance to be of real service to America. And if that chance ever comes ——

(INSPECTOR STEELE *reënters from R.*)

STEELE. Pardon me for overhearing, and interrupting, please, but—that chance may come a great deal sooner than you have expected.

CLIF. Why, Mr. Steele!

STEELE (*turning to* COLONEL ANDERSON). And I want to thank you now, Colonel, for your willingness to have me here, an uninvited guest, at this time. I must seem out of place among your young friends —

AND. Not in the least, Mr. Steele. Whatever your reason for asking to come, you may be sure I'm glad to have you.

STEELE. That's very kind of you. But I'll not keep you wondering any longer. (*He glances back toward the door.*) I had a code message from my chief detective, Clapp, yesterday afternoon. For the past year or two, Clapp has been hot on the trail of certain German agents operating in this part of the country. He has been particularly interested, of late, in a certain William Kurtz, and, according to his statement about a week ago, he has this man just where he wants him.

AND. I see.

STEELE. But Kurtz has not yet been arrested; Clapp feels that by letting him go on, apparently unsuspected, for a few days longer, we can locate several of those who are working together with Kurtz. Clapp got one of their secret dispatches yesterday. He declares to me, Colonel, that a confederate of this Kurtz intends to make an attempt to learn Dr. Gordon Peak's amyl gas process while the doctor is your guest in this house!

(ANDERSON *and* CLIFFORD *start.*)

AND. Inspector, this is impossible! A spy in my home? Who?

STEELE. That is just what Clapp was unable to find out. And that is what I *must* find out, with your help, here to-night.

AND. But, Mr. Steele, this can't be true!

STEELE. Perhaps it isn't. But I know Clapp wouldn't.

send such a message unless he were pretty sure of his ground. And, at all events, I can't afford to take a chance.

AND. How do you propose to find out?

STEELE. That will depend. Besides ourselves and the doctor, there are seven here, are there not? I mean, including your daughters.

AND. Yes, seven in all. Besides Marion and Edith, there is Ellen Gleason, and her brother, Captain Gleason.

STEELE. He is one of the young men in uniform.

AND. Yes. The other is Lieutenant Warwick. I got up this little party in their honor; they both sail for France Monday. Then there is Mr. Driscoll Wells. Of course you've heard of him.

STEELE. The pianist. Yes, indeed.

AND. He has just returned from a trip in Europe; he's been travelling over a year.

STEELE. And the other,—Miss Elmstrom. She has also been travelling —

AND. No, not travelling. She has spent four years in Berlin, studying music. She plays the violin. Mr. Steele, we can't think *that* of any of these people,—a spy! Your man didn't say it would be attempted to-night!

STEELE. But no other time is possible. Please don't worry, Colonel; they haven't a chance in the world of doing it. Why, do you think they could torture it out of the doctor, here in your house? But, if any one here has the *desire* to do it, he'll show it, provided we give him the chance!

CLIF. But, Mr. Steele, what chance —

STEELE. That's just where you come in! The thought struck me about five minutes ago, when I heard them talking about your feats on the stage. Will you help me, if you can?

CLIF. Of course I will! But what on earth —

STEELE. I'll tell you. You did a book mystery near the end of your performance last Saturday,—an experiment where you found out a chosen word, which some one had written on paper and had locked inside a metal box.

CLIF. Yes! A simple psychology experiment —

STEELE. That's it. Just how much preparation would you need, in order to do that trick here this evening?

CLIF. Absolutely none! I could do it anywhere, at any time.

STEELE. Good. Will you do it for us a little later, if some one asks you?

CLIF. Of course I will. I always come ready to do two or three experiments, if I am asked. But, Inspector, what on earth —

STEELE. Listen. You'll do it once. Understand? Then I want Colonel Anderson to declare that the trick is a fake,—that it could not be done except with certain kinds of words. You will declare that it could, no matter what words were chosen. We will both express great doubt of that. Now, you are a good actor. You must be natural. I want you to remark, in a perfectly ordinary, unaffected manner, that you could do it,—even if Dr. Gordon Peak should write his process for amyl trench gas!

AND. Inspector, that's the cleverest scheme I ever heard!

CLIF. Ah, now I understand it! But, Mr. Steele, you—you don't want me to let him write it!

STEELE. No! No! Not under any circumstances! I simply want you to *suggest* this,—to put the thought suddenly into every one's mind.

CLIF. By Jove, that's clever! Then you intend to use your power to read expressions —

STEELE. You have it. And if any one makes a slip, we'll get him! Remember, nothing but the suggestion. Dr. Peak would never consent to anything more, anyway. And, Colonel, we'd better tell the doctor of this before we try it.

AND. I wouldn't! He has been ill to-day; he would probably be unnatural about it, and spoil the whole test. Take my advice —

STEELE. Here they are. Now, Clifford, please be natural!

Enter MARION, ELLEN, EDITH, DOROTHY, DRISCOLL
WELLS, DR. GORDON PEAK, FRANK GLEASON, *and*

HAMILTON WARWICK. *WELLS is conversing with DR. PEAK. DR. GORDON PEAK is a tall, frail man, about the age of COLONEL ANDERSON. The noticeable roundness of his shoulders, his rather pale countenance, his hair which has begun to turn gray, and the slight nervousness of his speech and manner,—all bear witness to the years of toil which he has spent in the laboratory.*

WELLS. I suppose you'll be astounded by this, Dr. Peak, but even now I don't know the first thing about your discovery.

DOR. We have all heard so much, and we don't really know a thing about it!

(DR. PEAK has started to reply, but he stops instantly when DOROTHY ELMSTROM addresses him. He answers her a bit stiffly.)

DR. PEAK. There is not very much that I feel I can say, Miss Elmstrom. Oh, good-evening, Mr. Clifford

(He comes forward and shakes hands with him.)

WELLS. But—er—do I understand that you have discovered some kind of poison, Dr.—

PEAK. Oh, yes, Mr. Wells. Yes, it is a poison. Or, rather, I have merely discovered the process by which amyl nitrite can be converted into this substance.

WELLS. Oh, amyl nitrite.

STEELE. Certainly an excellent basis for any trench-bombing compound.

WELLS. But just what is the effect of this amyl compound, Dr. Peak?

PEAK. It is really very much the same as in the use of amyl nitrite, except that the result is much more serious. There is a very great acceleration of the beating of the heart, accompanied by a pounding sensation in the head, and dizziness. Perhaps some of you have had experience with amyl nitrite.

WAR. Ah, yes, indeed! The stuff they use to preserve bananas!

STEELE (*laughing*). Not exactly that, Lieutenant Warwick, although its odor is somewhat the same. I have used it a little. It brings an indescribable sensation. It—it frightens one!

PEAK. That is exactly what I have counted upon. I had designed it especially for use just before a charge upon an enemy trench. The compound is expensive, and could not be used for ordinary gas work.

GLEA. Then you had intended it to be thrown by the men in our trenches?

PEAK. Precisely. Suppose that our soldiers have planned a surprise attack. A bomb loaded with this new substance is thrown into the enemy's trench, and explodes. My process makes the new gas heavier than air. It would sink into the trench, and the present form of gas mask could not neutralize its effect.

CLIF. But is this gas deadly?

PEAK. Indeed it is. In excess it would stimulate the heart so much that death would occur almost instantly. But suppose that the enemy received only a part of its full effect. They would be dizzy. Their hearts would be pounding at a terrific pace. Accurate shooting would be out of the question. Add to that a terrible feeling of fear which they could not explain. When our attack came——

CLIF. By Jove, this is wonderful, Dr. Peak!

MARION. And to think that Germany can do nothing against it!

STEELE (*quickly*). Yes, indeed, if we *could* think that.

DOR. Do you believe there is some means of their preparing against this?

PEAK. But, Mr. Steele, I've spent months on just that one question! I don't see what they *could* do!

STEELE. There is just one thing that they could do. That would be to gain the secret of this compound, and later return the gas upon our own soldiers!

(DR. PEAK *gives a little start, and stares at the INSPECTOR.*)

ELLEN. Hamilton, what a terrible thought!

PEAK. Oh! (*He hesitates. Then, in a slightly changed tone.*) Then you mean—spies?

STEELE. Exactly.

GLEA. (*with a laugh*). You can't be serious!

WAR. I really think this is all nonsense, Mr. Steele. All this talk of spies! Why (*laughing*), you know, I've never met a single spy since I enlisted!

WELLS. But seriously, Mr. Steele!

STEELE. I was never more serious.

PEAK. Have you been expecting Germany to attempt to steal this?

STEELE. Dr. Peak, you realize that Germany must know what you have done. Do you expect them to remain idle, when a determined effort might ward off this danger? I don't. And I firmly believe, Dr. Peak, that Germany will make that effort!

WELLS. I'm certainly thankful that I'll not have to be in the trenches!

PEAK. You were exempted, of course.

WELLS. Yes. My eyes, you understand.

EDITH. Besides, music could never get along without you!

PEAK (*turning to CLIFFORD*). Your eyes, also, I imagine, Mr. Clifford.

AND. (*quickly*). Not such a very good guess for a former heart specialist, Doctor.

PEAK. Indeed! (*Thoughtfully.*) Then, of course, you would not be justified in running such a risk.

AND. And Mr. Clifford, also, is doing a great work which could hardly spare him. To change the subject from war, and from spies, Doctor,—perhaps you have heard of "Professor Harkman."

PEAK. I should say that I have! (*He turns to CLIFFORD with new interest.*) I have certainly heard of you, and of the funds you are raising for our army. I knew I had seen your face!

CLIF. You've attended one of the performances?

PEAK. Indeed I have. (*He shows almost as much interest in the affair as the young people.*) And let me tell you, Mr. Clifford, that your performance was the most marvellous, uncanny affair that I ever witnessed!

Why, from the moment that I first saw that—that inhuman book mystery of yours, I knew I could never rest until I knew how it was done!

AND. That certainly *was* a clever piece of work!

EDITH. Why, what was this?

AND. (*laughing*). I don't expect you people who haven't seen it will believe this. But it's the truth. This wizard (*indicating* CLIFFORD) was blindfolded and was seated in a chair with his back to the audience. Meanwhile, one of the spectators chose a word at random from a large book, wrote it upon a small slip of paper, and himself locked it inside a metal box. George then took the book, and asked the gentleman three simple questions on some other subject. He never went near that box, but the man opened it and found the paper absolutely blank! And at the same instant George deliberately announced the chosen word!

WAR. Colonel, that is—unbelievable!

AND: But I saw him do it.

DOR. So did I.

PEAK. I should like to know how that thing was ever done!

AND. Well, now ——

DOR. (*at the same instant*). Why, I thought ——

AND. Pardon me, Miss Elmstrom. What was your idea about it?

DOR. Oh, no, please tell your solution first. I—I don't believe mine is right.

AND. Well, in the first place, the whole affair was a fake.

CLIF. A fake? (*In exaggerated surprise.*) Colonel!

PEAK. To me it's supernatural, that's all!

CLIF. Dr. Peak, there was absolutely nothing supernatural about that experiment. It was merely science,—scientific psychology.

(*An exclamation of ridicule from GLEASON.*)

AND. (*with a hearty laugh*). Scientific deception, perhaps, George! The thing was a stage trick, and could be done only by stage devices.

CLIF. No, Colonel. It is a scientific, mental phenomenon, and could be done in any room, at any time.

WAR. A most improbable statement!

AND. You want us to believe that? In any ordinary room, without — (*He hesitates.*) Well, for instance, in this room!

CLIF. Yes, indeed. In this room.

DOR. Oh, Colonel Anderson, let him try it!

PEAK (*with real interest*). Please do, Colonel.

AND. He can't do it! It's preposterous!

CLIF. It is the truth.

(Incredulous exclamations.)

AND. Show us, then! What do you need?

CLIF. Nothing, except half of the room. I'd like that smaller table, too, with the electric lamp on it. (*COLONEL ANDERSON brings it.*) Right here, please, near the center of the room. Thank you, Colonel. I'm ready now, if you people would be kind enough to move your chairs over to that side of the room.

(He indicates the side to the left of the table.)

AND. You'll need a chair to use yourself, of course.

CLIF. I'll take this large one, if I may.

(He places it about ten feet from the table, near the door at R., with his back toward the table.)

WELLS. You're a wizard if you can do it!

DOR. He can!

CLIF. Now, since we haven't any box to lock the paper in —

AND. Oh, just a minute, now! We have that very thing! (*He goes to a bookcase in the corner at R.*) Here is a wooden box (*indicating a dark, highly polished box about a foot square*) in which I keep valuable photographs. It has a lock, and I have the key here. (*He empties out the contents, and sets the box on the little table beside the lamp.*) We'll use this, George. And it's not one of your doctored stage-boxes!

CLIF. (*laughing*). Very well. I'll need one thing more. A book, from which some one will choose a word.

AND. Oh, yes, indeed. Just take your choice from the bookcase beside you there. No! Wait! I'll choose one for you! (*He goes to the bookcase, and takes a large black volume from the lower shelf.*) Here, this is "Military Chemistry." (*He lays it on the little table.*)

CLIF. Now, then, friends, we are ready for the experiment. I should like to have you bear carefully in mind that I do not make the slightest claim that I have superhuman mind-reading power. This is not sorcery. It is an experiment in the psychology of the mind, and is scientific in its method of execution.

PEAK. Would you please explain more fully, Mr. Clifford?

CLIF. I'll try. I know Mr. Steele understands this principle. You have all heard of his methods. It is well known that a guilty person cannot talk to Inspector Steele ten minutes without betraying himself. That is Mr. Steele's science. This is my science, and its basic principle is the same. (*DOROTHY ELMSTROM stares at INSPECTOR STEELE in wonder. CLIFFORD, to COLONEL ANDERSON.*) I'm sorry, but I am still subject to that old magicians' superstition against performing with a light at my back. Would it—could you manage to arrange it so that the electric lamp on the table would be the only light?

AND. Aha! So your science won't stand too much light! (*He laughs.*) Well, we'll have to give you a chance.

(*He goes to the door at L., and turns one side of the switch on the wall. The lights in the room go out, with the exception of the lamp on the table. The light from this lamp is not exceptionally bright.*)

CLIF. Thank you. Now, of course it would be more interesting to the others if they could know what word you are choosing. I'll go out, while you make your choice.

(*He goes out to R., closing the door behind him.*

COLONEL ANDERSON *picks up the book, and opens it at random.*)

GLEA. Suppose you give him a taste of his own "science," and choose a scientific term.

AND. *(lowering his voice)*. Here—here is a chemical name. It's really a compound word, or two words. It is "rubidium oxide."

PEAK. Rubidium oxide. That's good.

ELLEN. Please, what is that?

WAR. Oh,—er—something like the ox-eyed daisy, I presume!

AND. *(going to the door)*. Come in, George.

(CLIFFORD reënters.)

CLIF. Now we are ready. Colonel, you will write the word. We'll need a small slip of paper, and a pen.

AND. *(feeling in his pocket)*. I'm sorry, but I'll have to borrow both. Has any one —

CLIF. Here. This little block will do. And here's a pen, if you haven't one there. *(He hands the COLONEL a small pad of paper, and a fountain pen. He then draws a handkerchief from his pocket.)* Will some one volunteer to blindfold me?

AND. I'll do it myself. *(He follows CLIFFORD to the large chair. CLIFFORD seats himself with his back to the table. COLONEL ANDERSON ties the handkerchief over CLIFFORD'S eyes, and returns to the table.)* Now, I am to write the chosen word on a sheet of this paper, place the paper in the box, and lock the box. Of course I may hold the key myself.

CLIF. *(turning his head)*. Certainly.

AND. Good. *(He takes the pen and tries to write.)* Ah! I'm afraid —

CLIF. Oh, it's an old pen, Colonel; perhaps you can't use it. I always have to bear on quite hard.

(COLONEL ANDERSON writes quickly upon the block. Then, laying down the pen, he tears off the written sheet, drops it into the box on the table, and locks the cover.)

AND. There! George, do your worst!

(CLIFFORD rises, and removes the handkerchief from his eyes.)

CLIF. Very well. (*He comes forward to the table, while all watch him intently. COLONEL ANDERSON stands close by the box.*) I wish all of you to observe that I do not go near the box at any time, or even glance at it. My knowledge will come from the book itself.

WELLS. Incredible!

(CLIFFORD takes the book from the table, gathers up his pen and block, and again seats himself in his chair with his back toward the table. He opens the book upon his knees, and turns his head.)

CLIF. Now, Colonel, I am going to ask you three questions, which you must answer as best you can. This is the vital stage of the whole experiment.

AND. Do you ask me to believe that my answers will tell you that word?

CLIF. Precisely. Try as you may, you cannot prevent it. If you do not actually use the particular word in your replies, the effort to avoid this will be so great that I shall be able to learn what you have written.

WELLS. Mr. Clifford!

DOR. I've seen him do it!

CLIF. (*over his shoulder*). First question: Has the chemist a good chance for advancement in the army?

AND. (*carefully choosing his words*). He has certainly every chance.

CLIF. Question two: How extensively have you studied in music?

AND. In music! Why, not at all. That is, I play the piano a very little.

CLIF. Question three: What, in your opinion, is the greatest scientific discovery of the past three years?

AND. Unquestionably, Dr. Gordon Peak's gas compound!

CLIF. (*closing the book with a bang, and rising*). That completes the experiment! Colonel Anderson, you

will now find that the paper on which you wrote the word is *absolutely blank*,—that I have withdrawn the writing!

(ANDERSON *springs forward and unlocks the box. The others are on their feet in excitement. He seizes the paper inside the box.*)

AND. By ginger, it's blank! It's blank! (*He holds it up in plain view of all.*) The writing has gone!

CLIF. Yes, Colonel,—gone. And, before it went, it was "rubicidium oxide"!

(*A start from every one, followed by immediate and generous applause.*)

WELLS. That's marvellous! Simply marvellous!

EDITH. It's wonderful!

(GLEASON *steps forward and scrutinizes the blank slip which COLONEL ANDERSON has laid upon the table.*)

PEAK (*coming forward*). Wonderful enough,—but would you care to explain just why —

(*He checks himself.*)

WELLS. Oh, what is it, Dr. Peak? You see how he did it?

(CLIFFORD, *smiling, meets PEAK'S gaze.*)

PEAK. Oh, merely a suspicion, Mr. Wells. (*He turns to CLIFFORD.*) It isn't quite fair to you, Mr. Clifford. I've seen you do that trick three times, you know. I'll let the others work it out.

CLIF. As you like, Dr. Peak. And now, Colonel, I think you'll admit that —

AND. No, no! By ginger, no! This thing is a fake, and I'll stake my reputation on it!

CLIF. A *fake*?

MARION. But, father, you locked that box, and held the key!

GLEA. It *must* be a fake! What do you say, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. Well, that is the cleverest thing I ever saw done. I don't know how he does it.

WAR. To tell the truth, it's puzzling *me*!

AND. George, I don't believe you yet! That's no science! You did it by the book! By ginger, that's it! The mark of my finger in the book!

CLIF. (*laughing*). Colonel, that's absurd!

AND. Now, look here! If that "science" of yours is real, you can do this trick without the book,—with *any* word or sentence! Now, what do you say to that? I challenge you to do it without the book!

GLEA. There, *that's* the real test, Colonel!

CLIF. Your suspicion is entirely wrong. I can do this experiment with any sentence,—from any source,—of any nature. This is not a stage "book trick"; it is cold, infallible science. (DR. PEAK *catches his breath suddenly*.) You don't believe that, Doctor?

PEAK. I can't believe it! You tell me that you could find out *any* sentence, on *any* subject, which I should choose to write on paper,—no matter *what* it was?

CLIF. (*slowly*). No matter *what* it was! (*He hesitates*.) Even if—even if you should write the process for any trench gas!

(*A start of surprise from all.*)

WELLS. Oh, Dr. Peak, what a chance for *real* excitement!

(*STEELE is watching every face.*)

CLIF. Of course you wouldn't really write it!

PEAK (*laughing*). Oh, of course not! But for that matter, I *could* very easily outline the process in ten words, or less. But of course —

WELLS. It's the hardest test any one could give him, Dr. Peak!

AND. Doctor, he'd be helpless!

MARION. Father, he mustn't think of doing that!

PEAK. Oh, of course I wouldn't, Marion. That is out of the question. But, just the same, I know he could never succeed! (*He hesitates. The others are breath-*

less. *Very gradually, a slight change comes over his features.*) Well—well,—why not? (*He glances around the room.*) We're all friends here. We all know Mr. Clifford, and trust him.

AND. You mustn't even consider this, Doctor. I was crazy when I thought of it. To write your secret on paper!

PEAK. I know. But we're really safe here, you know. And the enjoyment —

STEELE. We never know when we're safe, Dr. Peak.

AND. You haven't really any intention of doing it!

STEELE. If you have,—dismiss it.

WELLS. But think—among our friends here. Why, (*he laughs*) we could imagine a regular spy-scene!

ELLEN. Oh, wouldn't that be *great*!

WAR. I say, that *would* be romantic!

PEAK (*slowly*). Mr. Clifford, would you be willing to undertake this?

CLIF. Why,—I—why —

(*He shoots a questioning glance toward STEELE.*)

AND. Doctor, we'll not consider this! It isn't right, and we cannot allow it! We can't run chances with our nation's secret! We can't risk America's safety,—for our enjoyment!

PEAK. But, Colonel, I — Oh, what is the use of taking this matter seriously? Why, (*laughing*) he can't even find out the words!

STEELE. Dr. Peak, it is very wrong! The secret of amyl trench gas is yours, and the Government's. When you risk its safety in any such affair as this, you are false to your American trust! You must not do it!

PEAK (*a trifle offended*). Inspector Steele! I —

WELLS. Mr. Steele, don't be a spoil-sport! We're dealing with friends here,—not enemies. I imagined you understood that.

(*STEELE stands in silence for a moment.*)

STEELE. Very well, Dr. Peak. I'll not interfere again. But let me merely remind you that the secret is now America's,—not yours.

PEAK. Listen, please. I have thought of a scheme which will make this affair entirely safe. If Mr. Clifford should succeed in discovering what I shall write, he will not announce the sentence aloud, as he did before. That *would* be foolish. He will write it out, and show it to me alone. All of you may depend upon me to give a fair decision.

AND. Why, that's a fine idea, Doctor! There's nothing objectionable there. Is there, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. I shall not interfere again, Colonel Anderson.

AND. George, do you want to try this?

CLIF. (*after hesitating a moment, and glancing again at STEELE*). Yes. I'll do it.

AND. Good! I shall stand here by the box, and act as policeman. Doctor, we are ready.

PEAK. Then I'll ask the others to take their places again. That is quite essential this time. (*All except PEAK, COLONEL ANDERSON and CLIFFORD take their original positions in their chairs.*) Now, first of all, Mr. Clifford, I am far from satisfied with some of your arrangements.

CLIF. What do you mean, please?

PEAK. In the first place, the electric lamp on the table. There are four bulbs in it, but only two are lighted. (*He goes to the table.*) I don't imagine there is any need for a dim light. (*He screws all four bulbs around very carefully for several seconds, until all four are lighted. When these are finally adjusted to his satisfaction, he examines the bottom of the table.*) Colonel, you will please hold the key of the box, as before. Now, Mr. Clifford, if you'll hand me the pen and paper, I am ready!

CLIF. Right here.

(*He glances around the room. All the others are seated. He lays the block and pen on the table for DR. PEAK.*)

GLEA. You are omitting the blindfolding this time?

PEAK. No, indeed! I shall attend to that myself.

(*He follows CLIFFORD to the large chair.*) No. I'd prefer to use my own handkerchief, if you don't mind. (*CLIFFORD seats himself, back toward the table, as before. DR. PEAK ties a handkerchief over his eyes and returns to the table.*) Friends,—we are ready!

WELLS. Now we'll see the test!

(*There is a moment of suspense. DR. PEAK takes up the block and pen from the table. He hesitates.*)

PEAK. I am *not* going to write near this table!

(*He takes the large book from the table, and goes quickly to his chair in the corner. (See Diagram I, on page 3.) There is a breathless silence as he writes. He tears off the paper, rises, and comes quickly to the table. He replaces the pen and block on the table, drops the paper into the box, and instantly closes the box-cover. COLONEL ANDERSON turns the key in the lock. DR. PEAK still keeps the book in his hand.*)

MARION. It's done!

(*DR. PEAK steps back quickly to a position of about five or six feet from the table, keeping his eyes upon the box. Some one in the back of the room gives a stifled exclamation of suspense. The positions of the various people at this moment are shown in the diagram on page 3.*)

PEAK. I don't intend that he shall use this book. Colonel, you have the key?

AND. I have!

PEAK. Then, Mr. Clifford, the process for amyl trench gas is in the box on the table! We are ready!

GLEA. (*from his chair*). Science,—we await you!

(*Slowly CLIFFORD rises. He turns, and pulls down the handkerchief from in front of his eyes. He hesitates.*)

MARION (*in terror*). George, what is it? What is the matter?

(The COLONEL starts, and stares at CLIFFORD. There is an exclamation from DOROTHY ELMSTROM.)

AND. George!

(CLIFFORD staggers a step to one side. His face is ghastly. He is staring in terrified horror at some object at the other end of the room. With all his strength he tears the handkerchief from his face, and starts forward. He reels, and recovers himself. A gasp escapes his lips. The others, startled, spring to their feet.)

PEAK (starting forward). Mr. Clifford, are you ill? You're hurt! Help him!

(He starts to rush to CLIFFORD'S aid, throwing the black book across to the table as he runs. It lands upon the table with a bang, startling COLONEL ANDERSON to action. Then, before DR. PEAK has taken more than two steps, the light on the table goes out.)

AND. Who put out that light?

STEELE. Colonel Anderson! Hold the box! Hold the box!

(CLIFFORD dashes forward to the table in the darkness.)

AND. Don't let him fool you! It's part of his trick!

(At the table there is the sound of a quick, furious struggle. There is a tearing of paper, the sound of a blow, and a gasp of pain from CLIFFORD. Then, in a flash, the main lights of the room snap on. The positions are now as indicated in Diagram II, on page 3. COLONEL ANDERSON is still holding on to the black box. WELLS is at his side. MARION has dashed past them, and has clutched CLIFFORD'S arm. DR. PEAK is at the other corner of the table. Beside him is ELLEN GLEASON. DOROTHY ELMSTROM has groped her way to the end of the table where the light stands. EDITH ANDERSON and WARWICK have not been able to get past the first row of chairs. INSPECTOR STEELE, in the far corner, has just turned

on the lights from the switch. GLEASON, also, about six feet away, is obviously in the act of running to the switch. CLIFFORD is still staggering from side to side, breathing in great gasps. In his hand he holds the torn corner of a piece of paper. DR. PEAK, by the table, is staring, white with fear and dread, at the scrap of paper in CLIFFORD'S hand.)

MARION. Father, he's ill! It's his heart! A glass of water!

(EDITH hurries to the door at R. WARWICK follows. WELLS and GLEASON race after them, calling for water. STEELE tries in vain to keep them in the room.)

AND. Marion, he's all right! It's part of his game; he's fooling us! *(He springs forward and unlocks the box.)* The paper's blank again! He's done it! George, you're a wonder!

CLIF. *(choking, but finding his voice with an effort).* It's gone! It's gone! *(He whirls toward DR. PEAK.)* Doctor, your secret — *(Chokes.)*

PEAK *(wildly, still staring at the torn scrap of paper).* What is gone? What do you mean?

AND. George, you can't mean —

CLIF. *(starting forward).* I didn't get it! I didn't get it! On my honor, I didn't — Ogh!—My head will burst! *(He gasps again.)* Doctor, some one has found out how I do this! A thief has broken into my trick,—and has stolen your secret!

(A gasp of horror from all.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*The office of INSPECTOR STEELE. Saturday afternoon. The scene is a plain room. Door at R. leading to the waiting-room. Door at L. leading to STEELE'S inner office. At the back of the room, near R., there is a long table, upon which can be seen several pieces of small apparatus, a number of piles of books, and a telephone. Close at hand is a speaking-tube. Near the front, in the center of the room, is a smaller table, with chairs arranged around it. Among the pieces of apparatus on the long table, the largest is a black metal instrument about fifteen inches high and a foot square. From this instrument a set of wires leads to a series of seven peculiarly shaped black chairs, which are lined up along the wall near L.*

Enter DETECTIVE WHITE, from R. He is a small, unassuming man, about thirty years of age. He goes to the door at L., and knocks. INSPECTOR STEELE opens it.

WHITE. Colonel Anderson has come, sir.

STEELE (*entering, and closing the door*). Oh, yes. Bring him right in.

WHITE. Yes, sir. [*Exit to R.*]

(COLONEL ANDERSON *enters immediately.*)

STEELE. Good-afternoon, Colonel. Thank you for coming early.

AND. Not at all. I received your message at luncheon. Inspector, *what* are we to do?

STEELE (*indicating a chair*). Won't you be seated, please. (*He seats himself at the table with the COLONEL.*) What are we to do, you say? Why, recover that paper, that's all.

AND. Oh, Mr. Steele, I can't bear to think of it! Dr. Gordon Peak's secret—stolen, while he is my guest! And what can we do now? You lost your only chance, Inspector, when you didn't detain the whole crowd at my home last night.

STEELE (*shaking his head*). No, no, Colonel. That wasn't any chance at all. What if we had made a search there?

AND. We would have found that paper!

STEELE. Be reasonable, please. You know several of your guests had rushed out of the room before I could stop them. At the first hint of a search that paper would have been destroyed,—and the secret have been gone completely.

AND. But if he destroyed it, then he couldn't use —

STEELE. What of that? You heard Dr. Peak say that the process could be outlined in at least ten words. You imagine that a man clever enough to take that paper as this thief did could not memorize ten words!

AND. I—I guess you're right. But what *have* you done?

STEELE. Merely the logical thing. I called up my office directly after the theft last evening. By ten o'clock I had a squad of my operatives on hand, and they have "shadowed" every member of your party from the moment that he or she left your house last night. Not one of your guests, Colonel Anderson, has had a single opportunity of communicating with a German agent since the theft!

AND. Good work! I've noticed two men outside my house, too. But now what?

STEELE. Now to arrest the thief, before he can make use of his knowledge. Of course you've kept this whole affair a secret, as I suggested.

AND. Absolutely. Certainly no one, except ourselves and my guests, knows that Dr. Peak's secret has been stolen.

STEELE. Good. Now, I have requested every member of your party to be here at this office at three o'clock. I expect Mr. Clifford earlier. Of course Dr. Peak is coming?

AND. He is. He seems almost a nervous wreck to-day, but he intends to come. But what is your plan?

(STEELE *laughs slightly.*)

STEELE. It's quite simple. The thief stole that paper by breaking into Clifford's trick at the critical moment. I intend to upset him at his own game. In other words, Clifford's scientific psychology will now discover the guilty person!

AND. But, Inspector, that paper in the box was blank! *Blank*, just as it was in the simple two-word experiment! (*He leans forward in excitement.*) What did that person steal?

STEELE. I expect Clifford to answer that question. Frankly, I don't know. Meanwhile, I need more data. (*He takes a sheet of paper from a drawer in the table.*) I'm not certain that I have the real addresses of all your guests.

AND. Oh, I see.

STEELE. We'll take each one, in order. First of all, of course, your daughters Marion and Edith are now at your home.

AND. Certainly.

STEELE. And Dr. Peak himself, you said, is still your guest. I believe his own rooms are ——

AND. Oh, yes. On Central Street. I'm quite sure that the number is 285. (*He consults a letter in his pocket.*) Yes, 285.

STEELE. Thank you. Then, your daughter's friend, Miss Elmstrom.

AND. She is still with us.

STEELE. Yes, I understand that. And her home ——

AND. Why, she hasn't any, yet. She intends music as a profession, and you know she's been in Berlin, studying, for four years. She—she is alone. Her father died when a yacht blew up, just before the war.

STEELE. Oh,—Henry Elmstrom. I knew him. A chemist. And—er—now Mr. Wells, the musician. He lives on Everton Avenue, according to ——

AND. Yes. (*Consults his letters again.*) Near the up-town end. 28 Everton Avenue. Driscoll Wells.

STEELE. Then Clifford. We'll omit him; I expect him any minute. Captain Frank Gleason, and his sister, Miss Ellen Gleason.

AND. 490 West River Street.

STEELE. Yes. And Lieutenant Warwick.

AND. He is their neighbor. 476 West River Street.

STEELE (*folding the paper*). I am much obliged, Colonel. Now to return to the affair of last evening. Just before we —

Enter WHITE.

WHITE. Mr. George Clifford is in the waiting-room, sir.

STEELE. Send him in at once.

(*Exit WHITE, holding the door open, and motioning CLIFFORD to enter. Enter GEORGE CLIFFORD. He is pale and nervous.*)

CLIF. Inspector, this is all my fault! I hardly slept at all last night! I've been to blame for every bit of this! I —

AND. Nonsense, George. We were all to blame for this!

CLIF. Oh, no, no!

STEELE. Clifford, please calm yourself. You are not in the least to blame. We were all out of our heads, to have let such an affair go on.

CLIF. You understand, I didn't know what to do when Dr. Peak agreed to let me try it. It startled me so! I—I kept looking at you, Mr. Steele, to see if I *should* go on! And then, when Colonel Anderson asked me if I wanted to do it, I—I thought it must be part of your plan that I should.

STEELE. We were all a set of bunglers, that's all. If you come right down to the real truth of it, it was Dr. Peak himself, not you, who was the most to blame. But we can't waste time now. Putting all "science" aside for the present, I must know your exact method, step by step, for performing that trick.

CLIF. Of course. (*He takes a chair at the table.*)

AND. I can't see how you ever did it!

CLIF. Well, it's remarkably simple. In the first place, after you had written the two words on the slip of paper, the writing disappeared while the paper was in the box.

STEELE. Disappearing ink, of course. Probably very dilute.

CLIF. Of course. Both the Colonel and Dr. Peak wrote on the paper with my own pen.

AND. But that would merely cause its disappearance. How on earth did you ever learn the words?

CLIF. (*taking a small block of paper from his pocket*). The block of paper is the answer. I furnished that, also. This is one just like it. Here, look under the fourth sheet from the top.

AND. Oh! Carbon paper!

CLIF. Sensitive carbon paper. You had to bear on a little with the pen. You see what happened when you wrote upon the top sheet. A clear copy on the fifth sheet. When I took the book to the chair with me, for the second part of the trick, I carelessly gathered up the pen and block from the table, and—you see —

STEELE. Very simple now. Then the thing that was stolen was this block of paper, containing the duplicate of Dr. Peak's writing.

CLIF. That's exactly what happened. Of course this duplicate is of just as much good to the thief —

AND. Of course! Of course! By ginger, no one would ever have suspected such a simple explanation!

STEELE. It's very evident that some one did suspect it. Whoever stole that secret knew the trick, and knew that the vital information was hidden in that little block on the table. Now, Clifford, please think over this question. Did you, at any time during the first of the two experiments, see the slightest indication that any one might have suspected the real use of the block?

CLIF. (*slowly*). Why, I—why, no, I don't believe I did. I'm sure I didn't! For a minute once I was almost afraid that Dr. Peak himself had noticed it,—he had seen the trick twice before, you know,—but I'm—I'm very sure I didn't see any one else.

STEELE. Very well. Now please tell me, very slowly and carefully, just what happened after you started that

second performance of the trick. And tell me every single thing you remember!

CLIF. Oh, it's—the whole thing is a horrible jumble to me. It's all I can do to remember *what* happened! I don't know why I ever agreed to do it!

STEELE. Take your time, and tell me, step by step, just what you remember.

CLIF. Why, I—I started in just as usual. If I was more nervous than before, I didn't notice it. I gave Dr. Peak the block and pen. Then I went to my chair, where he blindfolded me,—after some one had reminded him of that. Then I heard him return to the table. He must have started to write the process there, for I remember that he said, "I am *not* going to write near this table!"

STEELE. Those were his exact words. What then?

CLIF. He walked across the room somewhere. He must have gone to his chair by the wall while he wrote. Then I began to worry; I didn't know just how far you wanted me to go. Well, suddenly I heard Dr. Peak rise and return to the table. A moment later Colonel Anderson turned the key in the box.

AND. Yes, yes. Go on!

CLIF. Then Marion—Marion Anderson—said, "It's done!" I remember that. I heard Dr. Peak walk back toward his corner. Some one gave an exclamation; I don't know who did it. Then Dr. Peak said, "I don't intend to have him use this book. Have you the key, Colonel?"

AND. That's right. I answered, "I have!"

CLIF. Dr. Peak said, "Then the process for amyl trench gas is in the box. We're ready!" Then some one,—and I can't remember who that was,—said, sarcastically, "Science, we await you!" And then I knew that the biggest test had come! (*He takes a long breath.*) Mr. Steele, I've never been nervous during a performance in my life. Never once! But just as I arose from the chair and turned around last night, and started to pull that handkerchief down from my eyes,—something went wrong! Oh, I—I can't describe it! I knew something frightful was bound to happen! I felt a cold chill all over. My fingers shook,—and my heart jumped right

up into my mouth. I tried to speak, and tell you that we'd have to give it up, but I couldn't. I was afraid, Mr. Steele,—afraid, for the first time in my career as a magician! And then I started toward the table,—and I looked up, and ——

(He stops, and covers his eyes with his hands.)

AND. You saw that the little block was already gone from the table?

STEELE. No, no, the block was there! Clifford was staring at the back of the room, over our heads. What did you see?

CLIF. Oh,—I —— It was horrible, Inspector! In my fear, I must have imagined it all. The—the big picture of General Grant on the wall by the door ——

(He hesitates.)

AND. Yes, yes! What was it?

CLIF. The whole picture started right out at me! Jumped right out, from its place on the wall! I remember the gasp I gave. Then Marion called out to me. I don't know where she was; it was a long distance away. I heard Miss Elmstrom's voice, too. Then the Colonel called out, and that brought my mind to its senses. I tore off the handkerchief, and started forward. Dr. Peak called to me; he thought I was ill. He threw the black book onto the table, and started toward me. And then—the light went out!

STEELE. Just a minute, before you go on! When you stared at the picture of General Grant, and saw it appear to jump toward you, did you see anything else that wasn't natural in the back of the room?

CLIF. I—I don't know. It seems to me ——

STEELE. Please be sure of this. Was there anything else that wasn't right?

CLIF. It seems to me that there was. I can't remember what, but I seem to recall that something else wasn't as it should be. I—I can't be sure of that.

STEELE. Very well. Go on. After the light went out you rushed to the table.

CLIF. I recovered myself the instant I saw that lamp go out, and dashed forward to get that block. I knew I must have that, above all else! As I ran, I heard the others coming, too. I reached the table and groped for the block of paper. I found it, and clutched it in my hand,—and another hand closed over mine! I struck at him, and missed. His other hand caught my throat. I fought; it seemed an age while I fought for that precious block. But I felt it torn away! I tried to cry out, and I couldn't! Then something else fell right on top of my hand, and dropped to the table. It was an envelope. It must have fallen from his pocket in our struggle. I snatched at that, but he struck me a blow on the head, and tore the envelope away,—all but one corner. I staggered back from the force of the blow, and then—then came the lights! In an instant some one caught my arm. It was Marion. (*He pauses.*) You know the rest.

STEELE. Then you mean for us to understand, Clifford, that the scrap of paper which you were holding in your hand when I turned on the lights was not a portion of the stolen block! It was a corner of the thief's own letter, which he had dropped, and ——

CLIF. Yes! Yes! It was an envelope! I have the corner here!

STEELE (*springing up*). Then we have him! We have him! Clifford, if any one ever tells you again that you haven't done your share for America ——

CLIF. But it's only a corner, Inspector! There's nothing on it ——

STEELE. We must see it, at once.

CLIF. Here.

(*He hands STEELE a small scrap of paper. COLONEL ANDERSON rises and comes forward eagerly.*)

STEELE. It is only the left-hand corner of an envelope.

AND. But see that! There's part of the address!

STEELE. And also that there! The first letter of the thief's first name, beyond a doubt. See that capital *D*.

CLIF. There's part of the next letter, too!

STEELE. Exactly. It might be an *a*, or it might be an *e* or an *o*.

AND. I can't see that. It looks more like the beginning of an *r*.

STEELE. Quite right, Colonel Anderson. I'd give odds of three to one that it is an *r*.

CLIF. And there's part of the address!

STEELE (*thoughtfully*). Yes,—28. 28. But 28 what? Colonel, what one of your guests has a first name beginning with *D*, and lives at number twenty-eight on some street? (*He consults the paper which COLONEL ANDERSON has prepared with him.*) We'll have a look at this paper. *D, r!* 28! There!

CLIF. What? Who is it?

STEELE (*reading slowly*). Driscoll Wells, 28 Everton Avenue!

AND. (*with a violent start*). Wells!

CLIF. By Jove, you must be right! He had been travelling in Europe, and ——

AND. But *Wells!* That harmless, good-natured little ——

CLIF. Who was it who pretended he hadn't heard of Dr. Peak's gas? Who kept asking him to explain more about its use? And who was the one who urged Dr. Peak again and again to let me try my science upon the amyl secret? Inspector, you have him!

STEELE. That's all very true. But how did he do it?

CLIF. What do you mean? He ——

STEELE. How did he do it? Colonel, you stood by that box from first to last. Before the light on the table went out, how could any one have moved forward from his original position?

AND. No one could,—except Dr. Peak himself. He threw aside his book and started toward George when ——

STEELE. And no one else?

AND. No one could have!

STEELE. Then how did Wells put out that light?

CLIF. He could have done it from the switch by the door, where you ran.

STEELE. Without being seen by those in the chairs back of him, and by me?

AND. But I'll swear that second letter is an *r*. And the address,—28!

STEELE. We'll never prove one thing on any such evidence as this. And proof we must have. Nothing but an arrest, and an immediate arrest, will save that secret.

CLIF. But, Mr. Steele, what *can* we do?

STEELE. Ah, you and I together, Clifford, may work wonders yet! Who knows?

CLIF. You and I!

STEELE. Exactly. You said last evening that you were only waiting for the chance—for a time when you could make a real sacrifice for America, as our soldiers are doing.

CLIF. Of course! But, please, what means have I —

STEELE (*with a little laugh*). I'm afraid you've forgotten. (*He pauses.*) Science will do marvellous things, you know.

CLIF. By Jove! You think it can be done—that way?

STEELE. I know it can! But wait. You realize that this thief will do his level best to thwart you, and to fight you. Are you willing to take the chance?

CLIF. I'm ready.

STEELE. Even if this criminal should—try to take your life?

(CLIFFORD *gives a start. Slowly he squares his shoulders.*)

CLIF. No matter what he may do,—I'm with you!

AND. That's what I knew you would say!

STEELE. Of course we knew it. (*He takes the corner of the envelope from the table, and hands it to CLIFFORD.*) Put this in your pocket, please.

Enter MARION ANDERSON and DOROTHY ELMSTROM from R.

MARION. Oh, here's father, in here. I wondered —

AND. Marion, I think Mr. Steele would prefer to have you wait —

STEELE. Oh, that won't matter a particle, Colonel. Be seated, please. (MARION and DOROTHY take chairs at the small table.) Colonel, I must have you in the inner office for about two minutes. (He leads COLONEL ANDERSON to the door at L.) Clifford, I shall want you here, also, very soon.

(COLONEL ANDERSON and STEELE go out.)

MARION. George, have you found it?

CLIF. Why,—no, Marion! We couldn't expect to, yet. We haven't had all the guests here, or ——

MARION. Oh, but you should have found it! You should, by this time! (She goes to CLIFFORD.) George, can't you see that if you don't they'll find more slighting things to say to me?

DOR. But, Marion, we couldn't expect him to have done everything so soon.

MARION. But it needn't have taken you so long, George.

CLIF. Marion, we must do the thing the safe way. The doctor's secret must be recovered, whatever else ——

MARION. Oh, I don't care! I should think you'd get it done quickly, for my sake!

DOR. (*placing her hand upon MARION'S shoulder*). Marion, dear, is that what you really want him to do? To consider you before America?

MARION (*hesitating*). Oh,—I —— But, Dorothy, you don't understand! Ellen Gleason called up this noon. And Frank has been horrid again this morning.

CLIF. What has he said?

MARION. Oh, he—he said it was all your fault that the paper was stolen. He blamed it all upon your—your “silly nonsense,” as he called it. He told Ellen he thought I—I was foolish, to—to have anything more to do with you, and ——

CLIF. (*hotly*). Then Gleason will take that back!

DOR. Oh, you shouldn't mind Captain Gleason,—either of you! Mr. Clifford is going to find out who stole that secret, and give it back to Dr. Peak again, and catch the man who took it! I'm sure of that!

CLIF. Oh, Miss—Miss Elmstrom, this is kind of you!

Enter EDITH ANDERSON, suddenly, from R. At the same instant COLONEL ANDERSON and STEELE enter from the inner office.

STEELE. Clifford. For about two minutes.

[Exit CLIFFORD, with STEELE.

AND. Oh, hello, Edith. But where—where's Dr. Peak?

EDITH. He's coming. He started to come with me, but that Mr. Morris came in just as we were ready. I heard them talking about a lawsuit or something when I left.

AND. Oh, it's that dealer again,—the one who supplied Dr. Peak's laboratory. Can't they stop hounding the poor man even now?

EDITH. But no one has heard anything about the theft, you know.

WARWICK *(from the doorway at R.)*. I say, Wells, old fellow, they must be in here.

Enter LIEUTENANT WARWICK and DRISCOLL WELLS.

AND. Oh, good-afternoon, Mr. Wells. Hello, Hamilton.

WELLS. It's rather unexpected to find so many of you here.

EDITH. You came down with Lieutenant Warwick?

WELLS. Yes; he called around for me.

WAR. And would you believe this, Colonel? A man in a little black runabout began to follow us from the moment we started, and he's down-stairs in this building now! You know, I think that's scandalous!

Enter WHITE, with CLIFFORD and STEELE. STEELE glances slowly around the group.

STEELE. Not present yet, Captain Gleason,—and Miss Gleason,—and —

WHITE *(going to the door)*. Dr. Gordon Peak, sir.

[Exit.

Enter DR. PEAK. He seems even a little paler than before; it is plain that his nerves have been shaken.

STEELE. Come right in, Dr. Peak. And do sit down; you seem tired. (*He places a chair for him.*)

PEAK. Oh, thank you, I'm not tired. But what—you've found out something?

STEELE. We intend to find out everything, very soon, Dr. Peak. I am only waiting for two more to arrive.

PEAK. But, Mr. Steele, the police know nothing of this theft. Don't you think ——

STEELE. It is quite essential that they should know nothing of it.

PEAK. But I am thinking of the officials at Washington. They've not had even a statement of the loss. We can't keep the Government in the dark, Inspector. These facts must be made public, and at once!

STEELE. I'm sorry. For the present we must keep every one, even the Government, in the dark.

PEAK. Mr. Steele! Kindly remember that the stolen secret was mine,—at least half mine,—and that ——

STEELE (*firmly*). I'm afraid I must remind you that I represent the Government, which owns the other half. I'm very sorry, Dr. Peak. (*He hesitates.*) And I'll agree to this. If Clifford and I don't succeed in discovering the thief by to-night at the latest, I'll very gladly make the matter public to-morrow.

WHITE (*entering*). Miss Gleason, and Captain Gleason, sir. [*Exit.*]

Enter ELLEN GLEASON and CAPTAIN FRANK GLEASON.

STEELE. Good-afternoon, Miss Gleason. Come in, Captain. (*STEELE walks slowly to the table in c.*) I think, friends, that we are now ready to begin. Of course you all know why I have summoned you. Dr. Peak's amyl gas secret must be recovered, and the person who stole it last evening must be arrested,—to-day. (*He glances slowly around the group.*) I have asked you to come here at three o'clock. This afternoon I intend to carry out a special test here, with the assistance of Mr. George Clifford. I shall start now. The person who

committed the theft last evening had only to run to the table to do so. Some one did that, and grappled with Mr. Clifford. Clifford, could any one present have done that?

CLIF. Any one, very easily, after the light had been put out.

STEELE. Exactly. Now, besides Dr. Peak, Mr. Clifford, Colonel Anderson, and me, there were seven people in the room last evening. I'm sorry to have to say this. I must suspect each one of you seven of being a possible traitor to America. (*He pauses.*) Any one of you could have stolen the duplicate of Dr. Peak's writing.

GLEA. Ah! A duplicate! So that's the secret of his "science"!

STEELE. Not at all, Captain Gleason. For Clifford's science will reveal the thief before nine o'clock to-night! Now I'll have to ask you seven——

AND. Pardon me, Inspector. But—but haven't you overlooked something in deciding upon those seven?

STEELE. I don't understand.

AND. I feel it my duty to remind you that I stood by the box on the table during the whole experiment, with the key in my possession.

MARION. Of course you did, father! What of that?

AND. That depends upon what Mr. Steele wishes to make of it.

STEELE (*slowly*). I think, Colonel Anderson, that we may neglect that fact.

AND. (*quietly*). Thank you, Inspector.

(STEELE *presses the bell for WHITE. Enter WHITE.*)

STEELE. We'll have the pulse register in position now. (*WHITE begins to drag the special chairs out from the wall.*) Be sure that the numbers coincide with the ones on the register. (*He turns to the others.*) This will be a scientific test of your knowledge and feelings, by means of reading the action of the pulse. Each one of those chairs is provided with a delicate wrist appliance, which is connected by wires to the instrument of the large table. This test is infallible. No matter how the guilty person may try to conceal his feelings, he cannot hope to deceive

this apparatus. These chairs are numbered, and we shall take a record of the pulse action of each one of you. (*He turns toward CLIFFORD.*) Clifford has been using his branch of science this morning in collaboration with mine. He has made several discoveries, all of a most startling nature. He will make known these discoveries when you have taken your positions in these chairs. White, is the apparatus ready?

WHITE. It is connected, sir.

(*He has placed the seven chairs in regular rows, at some distance from the wall. There are two rows of three each, and one extra chair behind these.*)

STEELE. Miss Edith Anderson, would you kindly take seat number one,—the farthest over in the first row. And Miss Marion Anderson, number two, beside your sister.

MARION (*hesitating, and gazing in apprehension at the apparatus*). Oh, must—must I do this, too, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. I'm sorry, Miss Anderson. But I can't leave any one out.

(*MARION and EDITH take their places. DOROTHY ELMSTROM crosses with them.*)

DOR. Marion, you mustn't mind a little thing like this. You'll let me sit here beside Marion, I know, Mr. Steele.

STEELE (*quickly*). I'm sorry, Miss Elmstrom! I have specially planned this first row, and I'll have to ask you to wait.

DOR. (*a trifle startled*). Oh! Oh, I—beg your pardon.

STEELE. Lieutenant Warwick, will you kindly take number three, in the first row. (*WARWICK goes to the chair.*) Thank you. White, please connect the wrist straps for those three. (*WHITE obeys.*) Now number four, the farthest seat in the second row. Miss Gleason, please. And now, Miss Elmstrom, number five. (*MISS ELMSTROM, who is standing between CLIFFORD and DR. PEAK in an attitude of deep perplexity, recalls her*

thoughts with a little start when her name is called. She turns quickly, and goes rather nervously to her place, without noticing that she has dropped her handkerchief. DR. PEAK restores it to her.) There. The other two may be in any order. Whichever of you two gentlemen wishes — Oh, very well, Mr. Wells. Number six, on the end of this row. And now Captain Gleason, in number seven, the extra seat. If you would be kind enough to remove your gloves. (GLEASON places his gloves near the instrument on the large table, and takes his place. STEELE assists WHITE in the adjustment of the apparatus. When this is finished WHITE goes to the instrument on the table.) Now, Colonel Anderson and Dr. Peak, kindly be seated over here, on the other side of the small table. (He follows them across the room, and turns to face the others.) The large metal instrument on the other table will now make an accurate record of the various speeds of your pulses. If one should greatly exceed the others, that fact will be unerringly recorded. If at any time the speed of any one should become great enough to indicate a very marked feeling of suspense or apprehension, that apparatus will immediately give notice of the fact by a continued ringing of the bell in the box. And, White, if at any time I raise my hand, it is a signal for you to read off the indications as shown in the record. If I clap my hands, you are to close the switch instantly, and preserve the record as it then stands. Remember. When the bell rings, keep on until I clap my hands. Is that clear?

WHITE. I understand, sir.

STEELE. Then you may open the switch. (WHITE throws the switch.) Take one reading now, White.

(COLONEL ANDERSON leans forward in suspense.)

WHITE. All of the numbers are quite a little above normal, sir. But no single one is in advance of the others.

STEELE. That is natural. Clifford, you may begin.

(STEELE seats himself beside COLONEL ANDERSON at the table, facing the group in the testing chairs.)

CLIFFORD *steps out into the middle of the room, with a black note-book in his hand. WHITE stands on duty at the instrument.*)

CLIF. I intend to begin by a brief review of the events of last evening. I shall pay particular attention to the conversation which led up to my second, incomplete, performance of the word-reading experiment. (*Pauses, and glances around the group.*) I was the one who was foolish enough to suggest an attempt to read Dr. Peak's process. Almost immediately Colonel Anderson and Inspector Steele very strenuously opposed any such proceeding. Dr. Peak himself showed no inclination to run such a risk. But some one,—I don't remember who it was,—kept urging him to do this. He finally consented, feeling quite secure among Colonel Anderson's friends. You remember what happened then. Mr. Steele at once declared that it must not be done. The doctor was almost dissuaded, but some one again urged him to agree. That fact may mean nothing, and I don't remember who it was. But —

EDITH. Why, George, that was —

STEELE (*cutting in quickly*). Not now, Miss Anderson! Clifford must not be interrupted!

CLIF. Friends, some one of you knew the secret of my mental experiment. One of you knew that if Dr. Peak should write his process and lock it in the box, the words would be accessible to any one who knew my experiment! That person lay in waiting, among the others, while I was blindfolded. He waited while Dr. Peak wrote out his secret, and while Colonel Anderson locked the paper in the box. He then quietly withdrew from the others, who were too interested to notice him. He crept to the other end of the room. Then, at the instant when I was engaged in a great mental struggle to learn the words, he put out the light on the table, raced back in the dark, and stole the secret. (*He takes a quick step forward.*) Do you know who did that? *I do!*

(*Startled exclamations. STEELE turns, and raises his hand.*)

WHITE (*from the instrument*). A slight increase in all seven, Inspector. No definite result!

STEELE. Very well. Go on, Clifford.

CLIF. During this morning, I have found out exactly what I wished to know. What happened just as the light went out last night? Colonel Anderson was standing by the box. Dr. Peak was a few feet away, holding the book which he suspected of being the secret of my success. I arose, in the midst of a great mental struggle. Dr. Peak saw my efforts, and thought I was ill. He threw the book onto the table, and rushed toward me. Then it happened! The man at the switch put out the light. He raced back, and fought with me at the table. And then—he dropped an envelope! (*Exclamations. CLIFFORD opens his note-book.*) I have one corner of that envelope here. (*He holds it up.*) Friends, on this scrap of paper is written the name of the person who stole Dr. Gordon Peak's discovery! And the first part of that name is ——— (*He pauses.*)

(STEELE again raises his hand.)

WHITE. Another increase on all seven. Nothing more!

AND. By ginger, Mr. Steele, you must be wrong! A guilty man could never stand that test!

ELLEN. Please, Mr. Steele, let me take this frightful thing off my wrist!

WAR. Oh, I say, do, Inspector! The thing's a beastly nuisance!

STEELE. Is that all, Clifford?

CLIF. (*quickly*). No, that is not all! (*He turns again to the others.*) This envelope was dislodged from the thief's pocket. It fell to the table. He tore the rest away. But with it fell something more! (*STEELE gives a quick start of surprise. COLONEL ANDERSON and DR. PEAK are both startled.*) This second object was a card,—perhaps the card which had been inside this envelope! The card fell to the floor under the table. It remained there, unseen, all night. This morning I searched the room, and ———

AND. But, George, that table ——

STEELE. Silence, Colonel! He shall not be interrupted!

CLIF. From nine o'clock last evening until ten this forenoon that card lay hidden on the floor, unnoticed, unsuspected,—waiting to send the thief before a firing squad!

PEAK (*starting up from his chair*). Clifford, it *couldn't* have been there last night! It *couldn't* ——

STEELE. Dr. Peak, I beg you to let him tell us what he knows!

CLIF. (*taking a post-card from his note-book*). Here is the card! One side is blank. (*He holds it up.*) This other side, which is the end of some one's message to this person, says this: "has told me that you returned the other day. I am so glad, and I sincerely trust that you enjoyed every day of your trip. How did you like the people of ——"

(*There is a loud, prolonged ringing from the apparatus on the long table. STEELE turns like a flash, and claps his hands three times.*)

STEELE. We have him! We have him, this time! White, catch that record!

(*WHITE throws the switch. The ringing stops.*)

WHITE. I have it, sir!

WELLS. O-o-o-oh!

STEELE. Who made that sound? Who called out then? Mr. Wells, did you?

WELLS. I did, Mr. Steele! I'll tell you; I did it because —— (*He checks himself.*)

STEELE. Then tell me. What was it?

WELLS. I—I'll not be able to tell you, Mr. Steele!

STEELE. You'll have to tell me! I want to know why you called out! Why did you make that sound?

WELLS. I cannot answer!

STEELE. Then I'll ask the pulse register to tell me!

WELLS (*starting*). Do you mean to ——

STEELE. That's quite enough about it, sir! (*He turns*

to WHITE.) Unfasten the wrist apparatus. Friends, I will make known the result of this test at eight this evening. I shall expect you all to be here at that time. Until then you are at liberty. (*The seven in the testing chairs arise with exclamations of relief, and hurry toward the door. DOROTHY ELMSTROM rises a bit unsteadily. CLIFFORD hastens forward, and assists her to the door.*) One moment, please. When I have examined the record in the pulse register I may find it advisable to see one of you at seven-thirty, instead of eight. That is all. (*The seven people go out. STEELE hurries to the speaking tube. STEELE, into the tube.*) Hello, Harper? See that each of those seven people just going out is carefully watched until this evening. That's all.

AND. George, we've got him, and you're the one who's done it! I'm proud of you!

STEELE. But, Clifford, answer me! That card—you never mentioned it to me! When did you find it?

CLIF. (*laughing*). Ten minutes ago, on the table in your office there! This side is blank (*he holds it up*), and this side is blank, too!

(*A start of amazement from STEELE.*)

PEAK. O-oh!

AND. By ginger! You bluffed him till he gave himself away!

STEELE (*seizing CLIFFORD's hand*). Clifford, I'm proud to know you, too!

CLIF. It's Driscoll Wells! I made up that message, and it got him!

STEELE. White, we'll have that record!

(*He takes a paper from his pocket.*)

AND. Wells cried out when he heard the bell!

CLIF. And the instrument will show his guilt!

WHITE (*from the machine*). Up to the last minute, sir, there was only a gradual increase for every number. When the bell rang —

STEELE. Yes, yes!

WHITE. When the bell rang, *this* one started at a

terrific pace, and rang the bell in ten seconds! Inspector, the indicator was rung by number five!

(STEELE *himself gives a visible start.*)

CLIF. Number five?

PEAK. Who was that? Was that Wells?

AND. (*peering over STEELE's shoulder*). No, by ginger! Wells was number six! Number five—is—Miss Dorothy Elmstrom!

PEAK. I knew it! She's a spy!

CLIF. (*starting*). Oh, no,—no!

STEELE. White! Miss Dorothy Elmstrom, at seventy instead of eight!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same as Act II. Saturday evening. The seven testing chairs have been taken from the room, and the pulse register has been removed from the long table. On one end of this table a pair of brown gloves are visible.*

(INSPECTOR STEELE is seated at the small table, with a large assortment of newspapers and other papers spread out before him. On one end of the table is a fruit dish, containing a number of apples, oranges, and bananas. He is eating one of the oranges while he searches among the papers. Enter WHITE.)

WHITE. Mr. Holton says, sir, that he can send you up a hot dinner within five minutes.

STEELE. Oh, no, White, thank you. I couldn't be bothered with it now.

WHITE. Very well, sir. (*He turns to the door, but pauses.*) Mr. Clifford has come, sir.

STEELE. Good. (*He rises. Enter GEORGE CLIFFORD. Exit WHITE.*) Well, Clifford?

CLIF. Inspector, I can't find one thing! I've worked from four this afternoon until this minute, everywhere, looking up Driscoll Wells' record. I've found absolutely nothing!

STEELE (*laughing slightly*). I'm afraid that's because you've been looking for suspicious facts about the wrong person. But now look here. If you've been working ever since four o'clock until this minute, you certainly haven't had any dinner. (*He starts toward the speaking-tube.*) Now, it won't take me five minutes to have Holton send up —

CLIF. Oh, no, Mr. Steele! Thank you, but I couldn't. I can't stop to eat,—I can't stop to do anything,—until I've proved that you're wrong.

STEELE. Now, Clifford, all this about not eating is nonsense. You can't expect to be able to do this thing well to-night unless you sit right down here and ——

CLIF. Inspector, I can't. It's very kind of you, but ——

STEELE. Well, then you'll at least have an apple or something.

CLIF. No, nothing, please.

STEELE. Come, come. (*He takes the fruit dish from the table.*) If you don't care for apples, here are oranges. Take one, and have a banana, too, while you're ——

CLIF. Ogh,—no!

(*He turns away, and places his hands over his eyes.*

STEELE *glances up quickly, and stares at him in silence. At length he sets the fruit dish on the table, and places his hand upon CLIFFORD'S shoulder.*)

STEELE (*quietly*). Clifford, what's the trouble to-night?

CLIF. (*turning*). Pardon me, Mr. Steele. I can't help this. I know you're wrong in your suspicion. That whole machine of yours was wrong, some way. And I can't rest till I have made you see that.

STEELE (*surprised*). Why, you mean—in regard to Miss Elmstrom?

CLIF. I do. Mr. Steele, she never stole that paper. She's Marion's friend, and she *didn't* do it!

STEELE. I can't agree with you until I know. Seat number five was the one which rang the bell.

CLIF. Well, she may have been nervous from some other cause. There must have been some other cause!

STEELE (*indicating the pile of papers on the small table*). I have just spent the last two hours considering that one point.

CLIF. And what have you found?

STEELE. What I have found does not tend toward lessening my suspicion.

CLIF. Inspector, this is all wrong. Driscoll Wells stole that block of paper! I can't prove it, but I know it! Hadn't he been travelling in Europe for about a year?

STEELE (*taking the fruit dish from the small table*). Very true. But I must also remind you that Miss Elmstrom has spent four years—in Berlin.

(*He crosses to the long table, and sets the fruit dish there.*)

CLIF. But the envelope, and the address! It's *D*, remember. *D*, for Driscoll!

STEELE (*turning*). Yes, yes! And *D* for Dorothy!

CLIF. How could *D*, *r*——

STEELE. We don't know that! We only guess the *r*. Clifford, there is not one other person among Colonel Anderson's guests whose first name begins with *D*. Merely those two. You set a trap for one, and caught the other. There is only one explanation!

WHITE (*entering*). Miss Elmstrom, sir.

STEELE (*quickly*). Just a minute. (*He goes quickly to the small table and gathers up the pile of papers. He opens a drawer on one of the sides, drops a pencil inside, and partly closes it. To WHITE.*) You may send Miss Elmstrom in. (*He crosses to the door at L.*) Clifford, I'll be back immediately.

(*Exit STEELE, to the inner office. Enter DOROTHY.*

WHITE leaves, closing the door.)

DOR. Oh, Mr. Clifford! I—I rather expected to find Mr. Steele.

CLIF. He'll be back right away. Won't you be seated?

DOR. Thank you. I—the Inspector sent word to me that I should come at seven-thirty. I—I suppose that means——

CLIF. It simply means that there has been a great mistake, Miss Elmstrom. You mustn't feel upset by anything Mr. Steele may say. He doesn't know who committed the theft. Naturally, he doesn't like to overlook anything.

DOR. Oh, I understand why he has sent for me. That instrument,—the pulse register——

CLIF. That is only a machine. It could easily make a mistake.

DOR. But it wasn't a mistake. I was nervous, and—frightened when you read that card. I don't wonder that Mr. Steele suspects me. I imagine every one will suspect me. They'll all think—perhaps I—stole the secret!

CLIF. Miss Elmstrom, you didn't do it! I'm sure of that! No matter what Steele says, I'll never suspect you! And I'll not let him suspect you, either.

DOR. It's good of you to say that, Mr. Clifford! I don't believe I deserve it. You don't know anything about me, except that I'm Marion's friend.

CLIF. But it's really my duty now to do my best to make Inspector Steele see that he is wrong. You know, you were kind to me last evening, when Captain Gleason was so—unpleasant.

DOR. Please don't remember that. You mustn't try to argue with Mr. Steele, just for that reason, if you really believe I—did it.

CLIF. Miss Elmstrom, I don't believe that! I'll never believe it! This whole thing is a mistake, some way. Believe me, please. I ——

Enter INSPECTOR STEELE. DOROTHY becomes nervous.

STEELE. Good-evening, Miss Elmstrom.

DOR. (*rising quickly*). You requested me to come at seven-thirty, Mr. Steele.

STEELE. Quite right. At seven-thirty.

CLIF. Inspector, Miss Elmstrom is nervous, and she was nervous all the afternoon. Your methods here have been frightening her. That's the whole explanation of that register test.

STEELE (*quietly*). Miss Elmstrom, please sit down. And you shouldn't be worried about this. It is certainly farthest from my intention to frighten you or to trouble you in any way. I merely need a little information, and I feel that you are the one who can give it to me.

DOR. Mr. Steele, I know that you have every right to suspect me. I couldn't blame you if you should arrest me now. I ——

STEELE. Miss Elmstrom, please. I have not the least intention of arresting you. I simply want information.

I know that when you realize just what the loss of Dr. Peak's process would mean to our country you will answer me.

DOR. Of course I will!

STEELE. Thank you. (*He takes a chair by the table.*) Perhaps you remember that the chair you occupied in the test this afternoon was number five.

DOR. Yes.

STEELE. When my assistant examined the record later, he found that the bell had been rung by a very great increase of speed in the pulse action of number five. I felt it necessary to look into your case this afternoon and to summon you here at this time.

DOR. I understand.

STEELE. I find that you have spent the last four years in Berlin. Studying music, I understand.

DOR. That is true. And I admit —

STEELE. You don't need to admit anything. Now, Miss Elmstrom, I have never known that pulse register to make a mistake. It shows clearly that you were in the greatest agitation when Clifford read that card this afternoon.

DOR. I was! It was—terrible!

STEELE. Then all I ask you to do is to explain that agitation.

DOR. Mr. Steele, I can't explain it! I—I don't know why it came! When I first sat down there everything was all right. And through the whole test, until the very end, it was all right. But when Mr. Clifford held up the card, and said there was a message on the other side,—I was frightened! I wasn't afraid of the words; I couldn't even guess what they could be. But when he began to read it, I could feel myself shaking all over! And then that bell rang! Mr. Steele, it was a terrible sound! It nearly broke my ear-drums, and I thought my head would burst open!

CLIF. I'd like to know who frightened you!

DOR. It was the bell that made me jump! I nearly started out of the chair. I felt that I must hold on to something. I put out my hand, and grasped the arm of the next chair with all my strength. I—I don't know

what I did! I must have caught Mr. Wells' wrist, and twisted it against the arm of his chair, for I heard him cry out in pain.

STEELE. So that's the explanation!

DOR. Then I heard your voice, and I seemed to wake up! Mr. Steele, I've told you the truth, and every bit of it! I don't know what frightened me, but I never felt so—terribly—in my life!

CLIF. Inspector, I know that's the truth!

STEELE. Until that moment you had not the slightest feeling of agitation?

DOR. No!

STEELE. Miss Elmstrom, I'm sorry to say that you have *not* told me all the truth.

CLIF. Inspector——

STEELE. One moment, Clifford. Miss Elmstrom, you were nervous before you ever sat in the testing chair. I was watching every person in this office, and I am certain of that. The reason why you wished to sit beside Miss Marion Anderson was because you yourself were nervous.

DOR. (*starting, and staring at him*). Mr. Steele!

STEELE. Tell me, please! Isn't that the truth?

DOR. (*hesitating*). Yes!

STEELE. That's better. When I called your name, and asked you to take your place in the chair, you started. You never noticed that you had dropped your handkerchief until Dr. Peak restored it to you. I must know the exact cause of this uneasiness.

DOR. I—don't believe I can explain it.

STEELE. I'm really afraid that you'll have to explain it.

DOR. Oh, can't you understand, Mr. Steele? I can't—I don't know what it was. (*She hesitates.*) I was afraid—of Dr. Peak!

STEELE. Of Dr. Peak?

DOR. It must have been. I knew he—he didn't like me, and I felt sure he would suspect me if he could. And then, too, I remembered what Mr. Clifford said last night about your power to discover a guilty person after talking with him five minutes,—and I was afraid of you! Oh, Mr. Steele, I know everything is against me! I've

been in Germany, and all! But I'm not a traitoress! I love America! I didn't steal the paper! Won't you believe me?

STEELE (*rising*). Miss Elmstrom, I believe you.

DOR. Thank you!

STEELE. But I confess I don't know who did steal it! And we must find out, to-night! (*He turns to CLIFFORD.*) There's just one course which is still open to us. If we could make the thief believe that we had already singled out some one else for suspicion,—if we could make him think that he is no longer in danger,—then he would be careless.

CLIF. Great! Driscoll Wells was heard to cry out —

STEELE. No, no! He'd never stand it, Clifford. He would defy you to show that card, and we'd be helpless.

DOR. Oh, Mr. Steele! Let me!

CLIF. Oh, would you do it?

DOR. I'd be glad to help you!

STEELE. You mean that you would be willing to let us accuse you before them all?

DOR. I—I would do anything to help you save the secret, Mr. Steele.

STEELE (*gratefully*). Miss Elmstrom, if you'll do that for us —

Enter WHITE.

WHITE. Miss Marion Anderson, and her sister, in the waiting-room, sir.

STEELE. They're very early. See that they don't come in here. I'll be busy for the next fifteen minutes. (*He goes to the door at L.*) I wonder if you'd mind waiting with them, Miss Elmstrom?

(*Exit STEELE, to the inner office. DOROTHY, instead of leaving at once, buries her face in her handkerchief.*)

CLIF. (*hurrying to her*). I'm sorry, Miss Elmstrom! You know it's all right now! We both know you're innocent!

DOR. Oh, you—you mustn't mind me, Mr. Clifford. I can't help this. It's been such a trial.

CLIF. Of course it has. But I know you've told the truth, in every word you've said. It's wonderful of you to help us! And I think you're just about the finest American I've ever known!

DOR. (*rising*). Oh, you are so kind!

CLIF. (*assisting her to the door*). And if there's anything in the world I can ever do for you,—I hope you'll tell me! I——

(*Exit DOROTHY, to the waiting-room. STEELE enters at once.*)

STEELE. Clifford.

CLIF. Yes. What is it?

STEELE. I have a little confession which I suppose I should make.

CLIF. A confession?

STEELE. Yes. (*He goes slowly to the small table.*) I haven't been quite on the level with you.

(*He goes to the drawer which he has left partly open, holds up a small dark instrument from within, and replaces it.*)

CLIF. A dictaphone! You've been listening.

STEELE. Exactly. It's been there since Miss Elmstrom first came in. I thought she might say something in my absence that she wouldn't care to say in my presence. (*He hesitates an instant.*) Well, as a result of this, I have one rather serious question which I wish to ask you.

CLIF. Oh! You mean when you spoke about that card——

STEELE (*shaking his head*). Not that. In fact, this is in regard to a very different matter. (*He pauses, and goes on slowly.*) It's merely this. Do you think you're quite—fair—to Miss Anderson? (*CLIFFORD gives a start of surprise, and stares at the INSPECTOR.*) I hope you'll not feel offended by this.

CLIF. Of course I'll not, Mr. Steele. I—I realize that

you're right. I'm not fair at all. But I—— Oh, I don't know what has made me feel as I have about Marion, yesterday and to-day. I've loved her for two years, and I still love her, but I—I'd be blind if I couldn't see the truth, after what happened this afternoon. I hate to admit it, even to myself, but I can't help it. She's—she seems—selfish.

STEELE (*slowly*). Yes, I suppose you're right. But you should try to overlook it.

CLIF. I know it, Mr. Steele. I do know it. Oh, I—I can't see what makes me feel as I have to-day, about—Miss Elmstrom! (*He hesitates.*) I know you must understand! She's so much *bigger*!

STEELE. I know. (*He presses the bell. Enter WHITE.*) White, kindly ask Miss Elmstrom to step in here again for a moment. [*Exit WHITE.*]

CLIF. What are you going to do?

STEELE. I forgot one very important point. (*Enter DOROTHY.*) Miss Elmstrom, I'm very sorry to have to ask you to come in again. But there is one more question which I feel I must ask.

DOR. Certainly.

STEELE. It is in regard to your father. (*She makes a little involuntary gesture.*) I know it's brutal of me to bring all that back to your mind. But I'm afraid I must. I knew Mr. Henry Elmstrom quite well, just before he took that fatal trip on the professor's yacht. I understand that he was a—a German, and that he was born in Germany.

DOR. That is very true. But he came to America at the age of twenty. He became an American citizen, and married an American lady, and spent the rest of his life in chemical work here.

STEELE. And he never returned to Germany?

DOR. No, never. Four years ago he sent me to Berlin, to study music. I—I never saw him again. But he was a true American. There was never a thought in his mind except loyalty to our country. Oh, Mr. Steele, arrest me if you think I'm guilty! But please—*please* don't say anything against my father!

STEELE. My dear young lady, I never had the slight-

est thought of doing so. All I need to know, and all I ask you to tell me, is this. Was he ever in chemical work with Dr. Peak?

(DOROTHY gives a start.)

DOR. No! No! They were never working together, at any time!

STEELE. Then—er—just what were his relations with Dr. Peak?

DOR. Oh! I—I knew you would learn of it, some way, Mr. Steele! (*She hesitates.*) The doctor hated him,—hated him,—with as great a hatred as one man could ever have toward another! (*She pauses.*) That is why I was so afraid of Dr. Peak to-day. I knew he would suspect me, if he could.

STEELE. I am very much obliged to you. I'll not keep you any longer.

DOR. You'll not suspect my father! Please promise me that!

STEELE. I promise you.

(DOROTHY turns, and walks slowly to the door." Suddenly she stops, and gives a frightened, shuddering glance at some object on the long table. Then, involuntarily covering her eyes, she shivers, and hurries out. INSPECTOR STEELE stands in silence. He is staring toward the long table. Gradually a strange, silently menacing expression comes over his face.)

CLIF. Inspector, what on earth was the matter with her then?

STEELE (*after a pause*). So that's it!

CLIF. What? What is it?

STEELE (*turning suddenly to the small table*). Oh, I've been a fool, Clifford! A fool! I've let some one make an idiot of me!

CLIF. Mr. Steele, what have you found? Who was it?

STEELE (*glancing at his watch*). Clifford, we have just eight minutes to get ready for them! We can't waste one second now!

CLIF. But, Inspector ——

STEELE. Not now; we haven't time. Sit down here, quickly, please. Now. This afternoon you told me how you did that last card-reading mystery of yours,—the one where you make the name of a chosen card pop right out in black letters on a blank sheet of paper.

CLIF. Yes!

STEELE. You said you did that trick with a stuff you called "reappearing ink." An ink that disappears when you apply heat, but pops right back again when you stop heating. I suppose you could do that trick with some of my own brand of "reappearing ink."

CLIF. Of course ——

STEELE (*rising*). Then we'll do that, at once.

(*He rings the bell.*)

CLIF. But I'm certain that my ink is a little more rapid in action than yours. Here,—here's the way to prepare it. You could have it made up in two minutes; it's an antimony compound.

(*He hands STEELE a slip of paper. Enter WHITE.*)

STEELE. White, tell Foster to send up a bottle of my "reappearing ink" at once. Wait. Have him mix this antimony compound, if he has the materials. (*Hands him the paper.*) If not, he is to send up my regular ink, right away.

WHITE. Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*]

STEELE. Now, what else?

CLIF. A frame, if you have it. A metal or wooden frame for the paper, about a foot square.

STEELE. Good! I have the very thing here, somewhere. (*He goes to a drawer in the long table.*) Here. How is this?

(*He exhibits a thin wooden frame, which is held upright by a three-legged support.*)

CLIF. That couldn't be better.

(*STEELE sets it on the small table.*)

STEELE. Now, here's my plan. I intend to make it perfectly clear that I suspect Miss Elmstrom. I'm going to seem to be trying to complete evidence against her. This will make the real thief feel all the more secure. To do this, I intend to place in this frame the exact letters and numbers which we found on the corner of that envelope.

CLIF. But the address, 28!

STEELE. No one will notice that, except Miss Elmstrom herself. She has promised to say nothing. Then —

Enter WHITE, with a small bottle.

WHITE. Your "reappearing ink," sir.

STEELE (*taking the bottle*). This is my regular ink. The other —

WHITE. Mr. Foster is sorry, sir, but he used up the last of the alimony last week.

STEELE (*laughing*). All right. That's all. (*Exit WHITE.*) Now we'll see.

(He takes a large sheet of paper and a small brush from a drawer. Opening the bottle of ink, he prints a word in heavy black letters on the paper.)

CLIF. That is visible when cold, of course.

STEELE. Yes. There is the word "America" in heavy black letters. Now we'll attach this paper to the frame here.

(He does so. He then takes the electric lamp which is on the small table. This is a student's lamp of medium size, with a metal reflector and a long, flexible neck. He lights this, and sets it directly behind the frame on the small table.)

CLIF. It will take a minute for the lamp's rays to warm it.

STEELE (*standing aside quickly*). There! It's gone. (*The blank sheet of paper is visible on the frame.*) Now this paper is apparently blank. However, let us turn off the light. (*He snaps it off. In a flash the word*

"America" appears on the paper.) Ah! That's perfect! Now to real business.

CLIF. Just what do you plan to do?

STEELE. First of all, to make the thief believe he's safe. Next, to announce that you will cause the rest of the writing on that envelope to appear on a sheet of this paper. Then, when all present are staring at the paper on the frame, waiting for the name of Dorothy Elmstrom to appear after the letter *D*,—then will come the real name!

CLIF. By Jove! (STEELE suddenly removes the frame from the table, leaving the electric light. He turns this on, and screws the bulb around an instant. He then goes to his chair at the other end of the table.) What's this?

STEELE. There's a chance that this person might become desperate, and try to snatch away the paper before I could put out the lamp behind it. Clifford, do you call yourself fairly quick?

CLIF. Yes. Why?

STEELE. You are standing within three feet of that light there. I am farther away, and sitting down. Could you be quick enough to pick up that lamp before I could put it out?

CLIF. Of course I could!

STEELE (*leaning forward, waiting*). Then—try it!

(CLIFFORD makes a sudden dash for the electric lamp.

But, at his first step, STEELE bangs sharply with his fist upon his own end of the table. Instantly, the light on the table goes out. CLIFFORD, in the act of clutching at it, starts back.)

CLIF. Great Cæsar's ghost! (INSPECTOR STEELE gives him a long, silent stare. CLIFFORD impulsively strides toward STEELE.) By Jove, Inspector, I'm not in it with you!

STEELE (*laughing*). My dear fellow, there's no conjuring to that. Look. I merely loosened this bulb, so that any violent jar upon the table would break the circuit. Watch. (He again adjusts the bulb, and raps upon the table. Again the light goes out.) Now, you

see, all I need do later is to rap upon this table, to bring out that name on the paper. We'll now proceed. Here is a second sheet of paper, which I prepared this afternoon. (*He holds it up.*) You see that I have written there, in ordinary black ink, just what we found on that envelope. Of course I've magnified it greatly.

CLIF. That's good!

STEELE. There is the capital *D*, you see, and the beginning of another letter. Then, below that, are the figures, 2, 8. Right here in the rest of the space I am now going to finish out, in "reappearing ink," the name and address of the real thief!

CLIF. But are you sure you know —

Enter WHITE.

WHITE. Colonel Anderson wants to see you at once, sir.

STEELE. Send him in. (*Exit WHITE.*) Clifford, talk to him for a minute. I don't want him looking at this now.

(*STEELE quickly carries the small table to the back of the room, placing it in plain view, near the wall. He spreads the second sheet of paper on the table, and leans over it. Enter COLONEL ANDERSON. CLIFFORD hurries to meet him. STEELE keeps on using his brush on the paper, screening the writing from view by bending closely over it.*)

AND. Well, George, what luck?

CLIF. Very good luck, Colonel. We have the thief just where we want him. It's not Miss Elmstrom; she's on the level.

AND. Inspector, what on earth are you doing there?

STEELE (*without turning*). Merely preparing, Colonel. (*He again sets the frame upon the front of the table, and lights the lamp close behind it. He then attaches the prepared paper close to the frame, still screening it carefully. He steps aside. The letter D and the figures 2 8 are now visible on the paper; the rest is apparently blank.*)

There. I can't explain about all this now, Colonel. You had something to tell me?

AND. Yes. The truth of it is, I am so sorry for Dr. Peak that I almost wish you could do as he asks. This has been a terrible shock to him, and he feels that he is to blame for it all.

STEELE. Has something happened since this afternoon?

AND. Yes. The poor man has broken down under the strain. It was about six o'clock this evening, when I heard him in his room. He was sobbing, Mr. Steele, on the foot of his bed. I heard him saying over and over again, "America! My country! Oh, my God! My God!" I went to him, and tried to cheer him up, but he refused to eat any dinner, and he's hardly able to come here to-night.

CLIF. Poor man! Mr. Steele, we *must* find that!

AND. He doesn't believe you can ever find it. He only seems to wish now that we could drop the whole matter, and let the Government find out the loss. It has broken his heart!

STEELE. Let the matter drop? Of course we'll not. Colonel, we've got the thief. His name is over there on that sheet of paper.

AND. (*starting*). What!

(*He runs forward, and peers at the stand.*)

STEELE. Oh, you can't see it now; there's only the first of it there. But you will see it, very soon. (*He rings the bell. Enter WHITE.*) It is five minutes after eight. Kindly ask them all to step inside. (*Exit WHITE.*) Now, Clifford, show us that you're an actor! And remember that I can put out that lamp by simply rapping on the table! (*Enter MARION ANDERSON and EDITH, followed by DOROTHY ELMSTROM, DR. PEAK, DRISCOLL WELLS, and HAMILTON WARWICK. When the ladies are seated at L. of the room, STEELE places a chair at R. for DR. PEAK. The doctor is nervous. WELLS gives a little exclamation when he catches sight of the letter and numbers on the paper on the frame. STEELE, counting.*)

Nine of us present. Again two are late. (*He takes a telephone directory from the long table, and searches a moment, while the others take their positions at L. WHITE brings in three more chairs, and leaves.*) I—er—does any one know where I should look for Captain Gleason's telephone number? I'm afraid he has forgotten —

EDITH. It's under his own name, Mr. Steele.

STEELE. But there isn't one Frank Gleason in the city.

EDITH. Oh, of course you didn't know! His name is Drummond Gleason,—Frank Drummond Gleason. We all call him Frank, but he never uses that name in writing.

STEELE. Oh, thank you. Yes, here it is.

WHITE (*entering*). Miss Gleason, and Captain Gleason, sir. [*Exit.*]

Enter ELLEN GLEASON and CAPTAIN GLEASON.

STEELE. Good-evening. Just in time, Captain. Oh, by the way, I believe you left your gloves on the table here this afternoon.

(*He takes a pair of brown gloves from the long table.*)

GLEA. Oh, thank you. (*He stares at the paper on the stand.*) May I inquire what that is?

STEELE (*laughing*). Nothing alarming, Captain. A little more science! (*He turns to the others.*) Many of you have seen Mr. Clifford cause the name of a chosen card to pop out on a blank sheet of paper. There (*pointing to the table*) we have an enlarged reproduction of the writing on the envelope which the thief dropped last evening! Clifford and I have made a little agreement. If I can give *logical* proof against the person who stole Dr. Peak's process, then he will, by his science, fill out the blank space on that enlarged envelope!

(*A start from all.*)

WAR. That's impossible!

STEELE. I have promised to make known, at this time, the result of this afternoon's pulse register test. (*WELLS catches his breath.*) This was the result. Every record was regular except one. The bell which ended the test

was rung by the occupant of seat number five! (*A general start.*) And I am forced to announce also that this particular person was—Miss Dorothy Elmstrom!

MARION (*starting*). Dorothy!

STEELE (*slowly*). Miss Dorothy Elmstrom spent four years in Berlin. She learned music. She learned also to forget America! She came back; she came as a guest to Colonel Anderson's home; she learned of Dr. Peak's coming visit; she ——

MARION. Dorothy, you didn't!

STEELE. There is no other possibility, Miss Anderson. We have caught the person who came to your home as a guest, with her whole heart set upon serving her Fatherland! We've found the evidence ——

AND. Inspector!

STEELE. And now, if I can show Clifford *how* she did it,—he will show us the guilty name! (*He takes a step forward.*) Friends, look how you are grouped! It is almost identically the same as during the experiment in Colonel Anderson's home last evening! (*EDITH gives a start.*) Clifford and Dr. Peak are apart from the others. Colonel Anderson is near the small table. The others are in one end of the room. There is a small table, with an electric lamp. Now, if there is any one present who is not convinced of Miss Elmstrom's guilt, I'll give you a demonstration! (*No one speaks.*) Colonel Anderson, are you?

AND. I can't believe it! But I—I'm afraid it must be true!

STEELE. And Dr. Peak! Are you satisfied?

PEAK. I am! She is a spy! She tricked her own friend, Marion Anderson! And she must suffer for it!

STEELE. She shall! Clifford,—you!

CLIF. I know she did it, but I don't know *how* she did it!

STEELE. And you want me to show you ——

CLIF. I want you to show me—how she ever reached that switch!

STEELE. I'll do it! And when I do,—when I show you how she put out that lamp ——

CLIF. Then I'll fill that blank space on the paper!

(Excited exclamations from all.)

STEELE. I'll ask every one to watch! *(He joins the group at L.)* Now we are exactly as we were last evening. I shall go through that scene, step by step. Colonel, can you reach that card-case on the large table? It will serve as the black box to-night. And that large book beside it, too. It's about as large as your chemistry was. *(He pauses.)* Clifford, we are ready now; take your place. Every one keep an eye on the switch on the wall behind us. It's just where Colonel Anderson's switch was! And watch that paper for the guilty name!

(CLIFFORD steps into the middle of the room.)

CLIF. This is two minutes before the theft. Dr. Peak is about to write his secret. *(He ties a handkerchief over his own eyes, and seats himself, back toward the others.)* I have been blindfolded. I am waiting. Dr. Peak goes to the table to write his process.

STEELE. Kindly do so now, Dr. Peak.

PEAK. Of course!

(He goes to the small table at the back of the room.)

CLIF. But I hear him say, "I am *not* going to write near this table!"

(STEELE nods to DR. PEAK.)

PEAK. I am *not* going to write near this table!

CLIF. He walks away about five feet. *(DR. PEAK does it.)* He writes on the block of paper, and tears off the sheet. He walks to the table, and drops it into the box. Colonel Anderson locks it. *(DR. PEAK walks to the table, goes through the motion of dropping a paper, and returns.)* Then Marion says, "It's done!"

MARION *(from her chair)*. It's done!

CLIF. Dr. Peak says, "I don't intend that he shall use this book. Colonel, have you the key?"

PEAK. But I—I haven't the book here now.

STEELE. Perhaps you had better get it.

(DR. PEAK goes to the table, gets the book, and returns.)

PEAK. Now. I don't intend that he shall use this book. Colonel, have you the key?

CLIF. Then ——

AND. I have!

CLIF. Dr. Peak said, "We are ready. The amyl process is in the box!"

PEAK. We are ready. The amyl process is in the box!

CLIF. Then some one—I don't know who—said, "Science, we await you!"

(A short pause.)

GLEA. Science, we await you!

CLIF. Then—I heard some one move! *(All start, and stare around at each other. No one has moved. Breathless, they watch CLIFFORD, who rises.)* I got up! I turned around! I pulled the handkerchief down from my eyes! *(He does it.)* And then—it happened!

(A gasp from WELLS.)

WELLS. Look! Look at Mr. Clifford!

(CLIFFORD is staggering, as he did the night before. His breath is coming in great gasps.)

MARION *(in terror)*. George, what is the matter?

STEELE. That's it, Miss Anderson! That's exactly what you said last night! No, no,—he's only acting, now! Colonel Anderson ——

AND. I called out, "George!"

STEELE. Now, watch the table, and the paper! *(CLIFFORD gives a startled gasp, and stares toward the other end of the room, over their heads. They turn. There is nothing there.)* Then, Dr. Peak, you cried, "Mr. Clifford, you are ill? Help him! He's hurt!"

PEAK *(mechanically repeating the words)*. Mr. Clifford, are you ill? Help him! He's hurt!

STEELE. You threw the book onto the table, and started toward him. And then—— Do it, Doctor! Do it!

(There is a stifled cry from some one in the back of the room. DR. PEAK starts, and awakes to action.)

PEAK (*wildly*). She never went near the switch! She cut the wire,—the lamp cord!

(He starts forward toward CLIFFORD.)

STEELE. No! No! You didn't take the book with you! You threw it onto the table! Wait! You threw the book! You threw the book!

PEAK (*repeating slowly, as though in a dream*). I threw the book! I threw the book! And then —

(He turns, and stares at the table. He starts to speak, but fails. Then, taking aim, he throws the book. He watches, fascinated, as it travels through the air. It lands upon the table with a bang. And with the shock the table light goes out. PEAK staggers back, with a choking cry of fear. COLONEL ANDERSON springs to the table. And, as he whirls, the black, clear letters pop out on the paper beside the D and the 28.)

AND. Great God! It's *Dr. Gordon Peak!*

(The DOCTOR drops to a chair, and buries his head.)

STEELE. That's it! That's what came after the *D* and the *r* on the envelope! And there's the twenty-eight, which wasn't twenty-eight at all, but two eighty-five Central Street! Dr. Peak, it was the chance of a lifetime when Clifford asked you to let him try his trick upon your secret! You took your own secret, because you knew that once it was reported "stolen" you would be free to deal with German agents!

PEAK (*springing up*). No! No! No!

STEELE. It's useless to deny it, sir! Who was the one who had discovered Clifford's conjuring secret? You were! Who insisted upon writing that process, against all our objections? You did! Who adjusted the four bulbs in the table lamp, just as this one was adjusted, so that the light would go out at the first jar upon the table? You did! You insisted upon blindfolding Clif-

ford yourself, with your own handkerchief! You wanted me to drop the case, and make the matter public!

CLIF. But he couldn't have known I would be so frightened in the trick last night!

STEELE. Ah, that's exactly what he did know! When did your fear first come? It came when you pulled down the handkerchief from before your eyes,—so that it came before your mouth. Then you began to breathe ——

AND. *Amyl nitrite!*

STEELE. Exactly, Colonel Anderson! What is more natural? He tricked us with the substance which he understood the best,—the basis of his own discovery! He blindfolded Clifford with his own handkerchief, you remember.

CLIF. And when I pulled it down before my mouth——

STEELE. The effects of amyl nitrite. A terrific pounding of the heart. A dreadful dizziness. A feeling as though the head would burst. And a terrible sensation of fear which you could not explain! He knew well that we would attribute it all to the heart trouble in your family. Then, while you stood there helpless, he started forward as if to help you,—and threw the book!

AND. But, Inspector! The pulse register!

STEELE. That's where he played the cleverest trick of all. Two things he must do; namely, make the theft public, and throw suspicion on some one of your guests. He outwitted that pulse register for the first time in our history! (*He turns to the others.*) When Miss Elmstrom dropped her handkerchief just before the test,—who restored it?

DOR. Oh! I understand! Then came the fear that I couldn't explain! And the pounding of my heart——

STEELE. The pounding of your heart and pulse—rang the bell in the register! He knew it would! Clifford covered his eyes in agony this evening at the very thought of eating a banana. Bananas,—banana oil,—amyl! And Miss Elmstrom shuddered in dread at the mere sight of those bananas on the other table there!

AND. It's more than I can believe!

(*DR. PEAK rises slowly.*)

PEAK. Inspector Steele,—I did it! I—I couldn't help it! On my honor,—I couldn't help it! Three years ago I gave up my practice,—I gave up all I had,—to work for America! I spent my last penny,—I went into debt,—I kept on in debt,—until I gave amyl trench gas to my country! And then they wouldn't pay! They wouldn't trust me when I told them that the gas would never fail! They wouldn't even—help me—in the debt! (*He chokes.*) I'd given all I had to America, Mr. Steele! I couldn't stand the debt! I couldn't bear disgrace! I couldn't face ruin,—and a prison sentence! (*He hesitates.*) So I—I told Kurtz I'd sell it! (*He takes a long breath.*) I've tried to sell my country's secret! I've tried to,—but I couldn't do it! I saw my chance last night. I took it! I tried my best to go through with it to-day! But—I couldn't do it! I couldn't send that gas to Germany, to murder our own soldiers! This afternoon I thought I could! But when Kurtz sent word to me to-night,—I told him I would never sell! Believe me, Mr. Steele,—believe me! I burned that paper in my room to-night, and prayed you'd never know how near I'd been—to infamy!

AND. Doctor!

PEAK. Won't you believe me, Mr. Steele? In the name of justice, won't you believe me? I couldn't be the coward I had tried to be! I'll face that debt now, and ruin, too! I stole it; I fooled every one of you; I tried to make an innocent girl suffer for it! (*He straightens his bent shoulders.*) But I never played the traitor to my country, and I never will!

(*He sinks back into his chair. COLONEL ANDERSON goes to his side. INSPECTOR STEELE turns to face the others. They are silent.*)

STEELE (*slowly*). We may consider this investigation as dropped, at this point. (*He turns to ANDERSON.*) Colonel Anderson, if the Government officials at Washington do not attend to Dr. Peak's laboratory debt within one week, kindly let me know of the matter at once!

(*He bows to the others, in sign of dismissal.*)

AND. (*rising, with DR. PEAK*). Inspector,—we thank you!

(*DR. PEAK is not able to speak to STEELE; he gives him his hand in silence, on his way to the door. The others turn to follow.*)

GLEA. (*crossing to STEELE*). Inspector, your method of solving this affair was absolutely the best piece of work I ever —

STEELE (*quickly*). Pardon me, Captain! Let me remind you that Mr. George Clifford has done this!

GLEA. Oh! (*He hesitates, and then goes to CLIFFORD.*) George, I've been a cad! But I'm sorry, and I hope you'll forget it, after I sail. I'll only hope I can do as much in France as you've done here to-day!

CLIF. (*shaking hands*). Forget it, Frank. And good luck!

(*GLEASON goes out with STEELE. The others follow, except CLIFFORD. DOROTHY ELMSTROM, who is the last one going out, turns.*)

DOR. Mr. Clifford, I heard what Captain Gleason said just now. And they all understand how splendid you've been! I'm so glad,—for you!

CLIF. For me? Miss Elmstrom, I — (*He takes her hand suddenly.*) Dorothy, I wish I could make you understand how much I —

DOR. Mr. Clifford!

(*Very slowly she withdraws her hand.*)

CLIF. Oh, I'm sorry! I certainly didn't mean to—I only wanted you to know —

DOR. Oh, you needn't be—sorry! But—don't you see? (*She hesitates.*) I came as Marion's friend. I can't—I'll not — We can always be friends, can't we?

CLIF. You know we can!

Enter COLONEL ANDERSON and MARION, followed by STEELE.

AND. Miss Elmstrom, Dr. Peak has something he would like to say to you.

DOR. Certainly, Colonel Anderson.

(DOROTHY and the COLONEL go out, while STEELE turns quickly to the table.)

MARION (*hurrying to CLIFFORD*). Oh, George, I'm proud of you now! Proud of you! You've been so wonderful! (*She puts her arm on his shoulder.*) You did it all yourself, every bit of it, and you're a hero—*my* hero—at last!

(*And INSPECTOR STEELE laughs silently as he leaves the room.*)

CURTAIN

NOTE

The effect of producing the writing on a blank sheet of paper at the end of the third act is brought about in a manner somewhat different from that described by the character Steele. "Sympathetic" and "reappearing" inks act in just the reverse way in actual use. They are visible when heated, and quite invisible when cold. For the sake of a better climax at the end of the play, this brand of "reappearing ink" has been reversed in its action, so that it will fit in satisfactorily with Steele's plan of exposure.

This effect may be obtained in two ways. The first, and by far the more simple, is brought about by the rapid chemical action of hydrogen sulphide gas upon lead acetate. The lead acetate solution should be mixed with a little glycerine, to keep it moist during the performance. Use a small paint brush, and paint with this mixture, on

a large sheet of white paper, the words which are to appear. After the paper has been allowed to stand for perhaps two minutes, it will be apparently quite blank. The hydrogen sulphide should be conveyed by means of a concealed rubber tube, extending from the table upon which the stand is to be placed, and connected with a small generator at some point behind the stage. The table should have a cloth covering folded in such a way as to hide the rubber tube when it is extended across the table. The tube must run parallel to the stand which holds the prepared paper, and within half an inch of the bottom of the sheet. It must have a series of small perforations extending to exactly the width of the paper, so that the gas will be liberated where it is needed, and nowhere else. It should also be provided with a metal clip for instantly stopping the flow of gas after the writing has been made to appear. Hydrogen sulphide must not be allowed to escape afterwards in large quantities, for its odor is certain to be offensive to the audience if this occurs. The generator, which may be nothing more than a bottle with a rubber stopper and delivery tube, should not be set in action until the moment that the gas is required. The gas is formed in the generator by the action of hydrochloric or sulphuric acid upon iron sulphide. Iron sulphide and lead acetate may be obtained at any store where chemical supplies are sold, and may be found in any school laboratory. Remember that the stand must be placed on the table so that the paper is close to the holes in the tube, and that the gas must be cut off instantly afterwards.

If this method should seem impracticable because of a lack of stage facilities or for any other reason, a purely mechanical device for exchanging two sheets of paper may be obtained from W. D. Leroy, a dealer in magical supplies, at 103 Court Street, Boston, Mass., or from any other magical establishment. The apparatus consists of a wooden frame with apparently one thickness of glass, and provided with a device for instantaneously removing one sheet of paper and revealing another in its place. This method requires that a slot be cut in the table, and that there be an assistant behind the stage to pull a string

at the proper instant. It has some advantages over the other, although it will be found less dependable.

The gas method may possibly require four or five seconds for the action to take place. You will note, however, that this short interval has been provided for in the play. Colonel Anderson, at the final exposure, runs to the stand and stares at it while the writing is appearing, thus screening it for the necessary space of time. If it is found absolutely necessary to do so, Steele's first demonstration with the word "America" may be omitted.

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NOYES, *Mr. Roope's servant*.

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LADY FILSON.

HON. MRS. GODFREY ANSLOW.

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SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Robert Roope's flat in South Audley Street. June.

ACT II.—Morning-room at Sir Randle Filson's, Ennismore Gardens. The next day.

ACT III.—Mackworth's Chambers, Gray's Inn. November.

ACT IV.—The same place. The following morning.

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LEMUEL SAWYER, *constable.*

SAMUEL SAWYER, *his son.*

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PETER PRETZEL POMEROY, *his accomplice.*

NAT WILLIAMS.

ARIEL FREEMAN, *Abner's daughter.*

HEPSY SAWYER, *Lemuel's wife.*

CYNTHIA TINKER.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Living-room in Cynthia's home—Bay Point, Cape Cod.

ACT II.—The same; the next morning.

ACT III.—Room in Abner Freeman's old fish house on the shore; late afternoon of the same day.

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